Eliza Giffard - Nerquis Flintshire 1807

AN ABRIDGMENT OF THE HISTORY OF THE Old and New Teſtament,

INTERSPERSED WITH

MORAL and INSTRUCTIVE

REFLECTIONS

CHIEFLY OUT OF

The HOLY FATHERS.

From the FRENCH.

By J. Reeve.

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THE PREFACE.

AN abridgment of the hiſtorical Books of the old and new Teſtament was compiled in French by a noted writer of the laſt century, and publiſhed under the borrowed name of Royaumont. It is written in a plain, eaſy ſtile, ſuitable to the ſubject, and formed upon a plan, judiciouſly choſen, as it ſeems, to initiate youth in the early knowledge of holy Scripture, and well calculated to point out a method of reading the ſacred Hiſtory with advantage: the narrative is diſtributed into Paragraphs, and the Paragraphs are concluded with ſuch moral and inſtructive reflections, as are ſuggeſted chiefly by the holy Fathers to render the ſubject more intelligible and uſeful. A work of this kind in the Engliſh language had been frequently called for, and in obedience to that call a tranſla-

tion of the French hiſtorical abridgment was begun, under the encouragement of a liberal and gracious Patronage. The tranſlator had not far advanced in his undertaking, before he perceived, that the author's intended brevity had made his performance in many parts defective and obſcure; and that, to convey any tolerably clear and connected account of the ſacred Hiſtory, the rules of tranſlation were to be ſet aſide, and the Text itſelf more cloſely attended to. It likewiſe appeared upon a nearer examination, that the compiler in ſome of his reflections had not leſs ſtudiouſly flattered his friends of Port-royal, than he had been partially ſevere in others upon the Dignitaries of the Church, and in many of his paſſages had given ſuch a turn to the thought and expreſſion of the Fathers, as was more calculated to ſupport an enthuſiaſtic ſyſtem of Theology, than to promote the intereſt of true piety. This ſeemed totally foreign to the purpoſe of an Engliſh reader, and an alteration was therefore judged expedient, that the inſtruction might be rendered more univerſal, and the expreſſion leſs exceptionable.

In the hiſtorical account, which is here given of the inſpired writings, the thread of the narration is carefully connected and carried

ried on with as few interruptions, as the nature of the work will allow. Facts are related as they occur, according to the order of time, in which they happened, and not according to the arrangement of books, as they ſtand in the common Bible. From the creation of the world to the coming of our bleſſed Saviour the beſt Chronologiſts reckon four thouſand years, which they divide into ſix unequal periods, called ages. This computation of years is carefully marked at the head of each Paragraph, and this diviſion of time into ages is regularly obſerved, as a relief to the reader's memory, in helping him to fix and retain the date of memorable events.

The reader will undoubtedly obſerve, that many facts are related from thoſe Books, which in the Engliſh Bible are not ſtyled Canonical, tho' accounted Holy. How, or by what authority ſome Books of the ſacred writings have been received into the Proteſtant Canon, and others left out, is not the preſent ſubject of enquiry. Let it ſuffice to ſay, that this abridgment was compiled in France, where all thoſe Books of Scripture are held to be Canonical, as they are cited in the forty-ſeventh Canon of the third Council of Carthage, A. D. 397.

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The Canonical writings, being penned under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghoſt, contain nothing, but what is moſt certainly true, and are to us an inexhauſtible ſource of Chriſtian knowledge and inſtruction. A hiſtory, thus dictated by the unerring Spirit of God himſelf, is to a lover of truth infinitely more pleaſing, than any human compoſition can be. For there, he is not only ſure, that all the facts are true, he moreover finds, that many of thoſe facts are expreſsly foretold, long before any human marks appeared of their coming to paſs: he is there informed, how ſecond cauſes are directed by the hand of God to concur in bringing all things by degrees to their appointed ends: he there ſees, with what wonderful wiſdom the Creator preſides over all his works, how ſweetly and how powerfully he regulates the ſprings of action; and with what certainty he effects his omnipotent decrees, without infringing the privilege of man's free will: the rewards of virtue and the puniſhments of vice, the dangers of proſperity and the advantages of affliction, the ſocial and religious duties of public and private life, are there emphatically deſcribed and illuſtrated by example. Theſe are intereſting points to a Chriſtian reader, and theſe points are ſet forth by the inſpired writers in that

that ſublime ſimplicity of ſtyle, and ſacred energy of expreſſion, which no modern language can equal, and no ſtudied compoſition can pretend to.

Difficult then is the taſk, and more precarious ſtill muſt be the ſucceſs of an undertaking of this kind, where the object is both to inſtruct and pleaſe, as far as human capacity will permit, without deviating from the ſpirit or from the letter of the divine original; where the ſenſe of the ſacred text may be equally injured by a word too much as by a word too little; where in fine a reſpectful deference to the Scripture phraſe foregoes the ornaments of ſpeech, and yet a certain flow, with ſome degree of harmony in the compoſition, is requiſite to humour the reader's taſte, and invite his attention. However ſhort this Epitome may fall of the judicious reader's expectation, his benevolence, we preſume, will be the more readily inclined to forgive the inaccuracies and defects he meets with, when he is candidly aſſured, that no other than his improvement in Chriſtian knowledge, to the greater glory of God, is the true motive and deſign of this publication.

ERRATA.

ERRATA.

OLD TESTAMENT.

Page 30. line 14. for *ſhadow* read *ſhelter.*
43. ——34. for *Jacob* read *Eſau.*
93. ——7. dele *his.*
216. ——16. for *effected* read *affected.*
265. ——14. for *than* read *that.*
314. ——35. for *diſcourſe* read *diſcourſes.*
319. ——23. for *off* read *of.*
341. ——4. read *elevated with wine.*

NEW TESTAMENT.

125. ——22. for *ſon of Peter* read *ſon of John.*
136. ——5. read *witneſſes to ſay.*

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AN

AN ABRIDGMENT OF THE History of the Holy Bible.

AGE I.

From the creation of the world to the deluge, containing the ſpace of 1656 years.

§ I. *The world is created.* Gen. 1.

GOD, having decreed to make the world, as he has, out of nothing, created in the beginning a vaſt and indigeſted maſs, as it were, of matter without form, dark in itſelf, and void of all that order and beautiful variety of parts, which appeared ſoon after. The holy Scripture expreſsly ſays, that almighty God perfected this great work in ſix days. On the firſt, after having created the heaven and the earth, he made the light: on the ſecond day he made the firmament, to which he gave the name of heaven: on the third he ſeparated the dry land from the waters, that were mingled with it; the waters he collected together, and called them the ſea. He then commanded the earth to produce the different ſorts of plants and fruit-trees, with their reſpective ſeed in them, for the re-production and increaſe of each in its own kind. On the fourth day, he made thoſe great luminaries, that ſhine in the firmament of heaven, the ſun, moon, and ſtars; ordaining at the ſame time, that the ſun ſhould preſide over the day, and the moon over the night; that by their ſtated revolutions they ſhould alſo regulate the days, the months, and ſeaſons of the year. On the fifth day God extended his creative power from the in-

A. M. 1, *Before J. C.* 4000.

animate to the animated part of the univerſe. From the waters he produced an innumerable vari y of creatures, containing within themſelves the pri ciple of life and motion; fiſhes of various ſize, and birds of every kind, which he bleſſed, and bade to increaſe and multiply, commanding theſe to people the air, and thoſe the watery deep. On the ſixth day he commanded the earth to produce, not plants and trees, as it had already done, but animals and living creatures of every ſpecies. He choſe likewiſe on the ſame day to create Man, the laſt and moſt perfect of all his works: for of ſo many excellent beings, which he had formed, Man was the only one capable of knowing and of loving his Creator; and therefore for Man were they all created. The creation being thus perfected, God on the ſeventh day ceaſed from doing any thing more; for which reaſon that day was then conſecrated to the divine ſervice, and appointed to be kept holy in future times.

Such is the account Moyſes has given us of the creation, in which we find no mention made of the Angels; but as thoſe pure ſpirits do moſt certainly exiſt, the holy Fathers are of opinion, that they were created by almighty God, when he ſpoke thoſe words, Let light be made: and in conſequence ſaint Auſtin underſtands that ſeparation, which God made of the light from darkneſs, to expreſs alſo a diviſion, which he at the ſame time made of the good angels from the bad. Thus from the firſt exiſtence of the world, and in the moſt excellent of his creatures, it pleaſed the divine wiſdom to let us ſee, that none can be happy, who ſeparate themſelves from God; that to whatever degree of greatneſs or of glory they may be raiſed, they muſt ſtill remain ſubject to their Creator, ſince nothing can ſcreen them, if they tranſgreſs, from the juſtice of an offended Deity: therefore, as by the example of the good angels, we are encouraged in that indiſpenſable duty of fidelity, which we owe to our Creator, ſo at the remembrance of thoſe fiery torments, into which the rebel angels have been thrown, we muſt undoubtedly conclude, that God reſiſts the proud, and gives grace to the humble.

§ II.



§ II. *Adam placed in the earthly paradiſe: formation of Eve. Gen. 2.*

THE heavens and the earth being made complete with all their ornaments, and the Man, who had been formed out of the earth, being moreover dignified with a ſpiritual and immortal ſoul, according to the image and likeneſs of his Maker, God conſtituted him the maſter of the univerſe, and placed him in the terreſtrial Paradiſe. *A. M.* 1, *Before J. C.* 4000. Paradiſe was the ſeat of all earthly happineſs, a garden teeming with delights, planted by the hand of God himſelf, and adorned with every produce of nature, that was pleaſing to the taſte and charming to the eye. In the middle of this garden was a tree, called the tree of life, and near it grew the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Here it was, that God placed the firſt Man, not to be an idle inhabitant or a mere ſpectator of the place, but to keep and work it, as the Scripture particularly ſpecifies. But leſt in the midſt of ſuch delights he might unwarily forget his divine benefactor, on whom he ſolely depended for the enjoyment of them, almighty God reſtrained him in one particular point, and thereby gave him an opportunity of ſhowing at once his obedience and his gratitude. The precept was but one; it was an eaſy and a juſt precept. You may eat, ſays God, of every tree, that grows in Paradiſe, excepting that of the knowledge of good and evil: that tree alone you muſt not touch; or if you do, you will moſt aſſuredly die, in puniſhment thereof. He then made all the living creatures paſs in review before Adam; and Adam, for ſo the firſt man was called, gave to each a name, expreſſive of the nature and qualities, which each ſpecies of bird and animal was poſſeſſed of. Amidſt ſuch a variety of living creatures, he ſaw none equal to himſelf, nor was there one endowed with reaſon, to whom he could ſpeak his thoughts. He fell aſleep, and during his repoſe, God took out one of his ribs, which he formed into a Woman, filling up the vacant ſpace in his ſide

with flesh instead of bone. Adam no sooner saw her, but struck at her charming figure, with ecstacy cried out, This is the bone of my bone, and the flesh of my flesh! For this reason the husband in future times shall leave his father and mother to cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one.

In this first Adam almighty God has given us a most palpable mark of what was long after to happen in the second: and the holy Fathers tell us, that the mysterious sleep of Adam was a figure of the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. For then it was, that the Church was formed by our divine Saviour; and the water and blood, which issued from his gaping side, mark the source from whence the Sacraments of the new law derive their power to heal and cleanse our souls. This heavenly bridegroom having in some sort left his Father in heaven, came in human shape amongst us, to unite himself eternally to his Church, the spouse he had taken upon earth; and having made us worthy of contracting so ineffable an alliance with him, he most truly says of his Church, what Adam said of Eve, behold the flesh of my flesh, and the bone of my bone!

§ III. *The fall of Adam. Gen. 3.*

Before J. C. 4000. SCARCE had Adam and Eve begun to enjoy the delights of Paradise, when the Devil, who had been already ruined by his pride, resolved to try his utmost malice against them: he resolved to deprive them at once, if he could, both of their happiness and innocence. He was galled with envy to see two creatures, whose low beginning was from the slime of the earth, thus blest and happy in their fidelity to God, while he, an original inhabitant of heaven, was thrown down into the lowest disgrace and misery. He therefore began to execute the ruinous design, which he had formed against them, and undertook to destroy the succeeding race of mankind in the very root. For this purpose he made use of the Serpent, which of all animals

animals was the moſt ſubtle: and not doubting but the eaſieſt and moſt certain way to ſucceed would be to ſeduce the woman firſt, he thus expreſſed himſelf to her: why has not God permitted you to eat indiſcriminately of all the fruits of this garden? He has, replied Eve: we eat of every fruit in the garden except one, and that one God has forbidden us to touch, leſt we die. It is not the fear of your dying, anſwered the Serpent; it is the apprehenſion of your knowing too much, which has induced God to lay ſuch a reſtraint upon you; for he knows, that by eating of this fruit you will not die, but that your eyes will be opened, and you yourſelves will become as Gods, like him having the knowledge of good and evil. Eve, inſtead of turning away her ear, as ſhe ought, from ſuch deceitful language, not only liſtened, but was even pleaſed with her ſeducer. She was flattered with his promiſe; ſhe ſucked the poiſon of his words into her very ſoul; ſhe looked earneſtly at the fruit, and concluding it to be as delicious to the taſte, as it was delightful to the eye, ſhe put forth her hand, ſhe took it, ſhe eat of it. Thus was Eve gradually led to tranſgreſs the command of her Creator, and thus did ſin enter into the world. For no ſooner had ſhe herſelf eaten of the forbidden fruit, but ſhe offered it to her huſband, and he did alſo eat thereof. Rather than be the cauſe of any uneaſineſs to the ſpouſe he loved, he choſe, by a ſinful compliance, to renounce the fidelity, which he owed to his Creator, and thereby betrayed a want of that manly virtue, even in Paradiſe, which Job in after times ſo greatly diſplayed upon his dunghill, as the Fathers remark.

This is the tranſgreſſion, of which death, and all the train of human miſeries, is the fatal conſequence. This is the ſin too enormous in its guilt for words to expreſs, ſince in the father it ruined his whole poſterity. Sprung from rebellious parents, we are born the ſlaves of Satan; nor ſhould we have ever had the poſſibility of recovering our forfeited inheritance, had not God himſelf become our deliverer. The greatneſs of ſo unmerited a mercy, ought never to be forgotten by us; as on the one hand

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it challenges our moſt grateful acknowledgments to God, ſo on the other it admoniſhes us to be always upon our guard againſt every temptation of the old ſerpent. That malicious enemy of mankind ſtill remembers, and ſtill practiſes the ſame wiles, that ſucceeded once ſo well with him in Paradiſe. By a thouſand ways he daily tries to perſuade us, that we may innocently follow our own inclinations, even againſt the expreſs commands of God our Creator. But as Eve by experience found the threats of God to be as certain, as the promiſes of the ſerpent were deceitful, ſo we always ſhould remember, that God is ſtill as unchangeable, as he was then, in the commands he gives; and that the ſpecious interpretations we may be tempted to make, in order to elude their force, are no more than the artifices of a ſubtle enemy, endeavouring to impoſe upon the children, as he once did upon their parents.

§ IV. *Puniſhment of Adam.* Gen. 3.

A. M. 1, *Before J. C.* 4000. BY the fall of our firſt parents, vaniſhed the pleaſing proſpect of their happineſs. Being ſtript of their original innocence, they for the firſt time perceived, that they were naked. For while their minds were unſtained with ſin, and the appetite of their ſenſes remained ſubject to reaſon, they had known no cauſe of ſhame: but ſhame now followed the inward conſciouſneſs of guilt, and made them bluſh at what they had not obſerved before: for which reaſon they girded themſelves round with fig leaves, finding a total change was wrought within them. What had hitherto been their joy, began to alarm and terrify: they heard the voice of God walking in the garden; it was no longer the voice of gladneſs, it was a ſound of terror in their ears: they ran off, and hid themſelves, trembling with fear, among the thickeſt of the trees. God called upon Adam by name, and aſked him, where he was? I heard your voice, ſaid Adam, but was afraid of being ſeen by you on account of

of my being naked. Adam mentioned not the real reaſon of his fear, but ſoon found that it was in vain to diſſemble with an all-knowing God. Being ſeverely reprimanded for his diſobedience, which was the real cauſe of his bluſhing and confuſion, he began to exculpate himſelf upon the weak, but cruel pretence, that the woman had firſt offered the fruit to him. The woman, hearing herſelf thus accuſed, ſought alſo in the ſame manner to ſhift the blame from herſelf, and fix it upon the ſerpent, that had deceived her. But in a formal violation of his precepts, God admits of no ſuch excuſes: he curſed the ſerpent upon the ſpot, as the prime promoter of the ſin, condemning him to creep upon his belly along the earth, and to eat of the duſt thereof all the days of his life; and concluded by pronouncing his diſgrace and final overthrow by the Woman, who in her ſeed ſhould hereafter cruſh his head. He then addreſſed himſelf to the other two offenders, that ſtood before him, and ſentenced them both to the moſt afflicting penalties, which their poſterity ſeverely feel to the preſent day. He told the Woman in particular, that he would multiply her ſufferings; that in bringing forth her children ſhe ſhould groan with pain, and be for ever ſubject to her huſband's power. To Adam he ſaid, that ſince he had prefered the woman's voice to the voice of God, the earth ſhould be curſed on that account; that notwithſtanding his hard labour to render it fertile, it ſhould produce him briars and thorns; and that by the ſweat of his brow he ſhould earn his bread, until he returned to duſt, from whence he had been taken. After this he cloathed them with the ſkins of beaſts, and to make them ſtill more ſenſible of their ſinful folly, he ironically exclaimed, behold! Adam is become like one of us; by experience he has now the knowledge of good and evil. He never ſhall come near the tree of life, leſt he ſhould be for eating alſo of that fruit, and live for ever. God therefore drove them out of Paradiſe, and at the entrance placed a Cherubim with a fiery ſword, to prevent their return.

Thus

Thus were our unhappy parents compelled to quit that garden of delights: thus were they ſent out to bewail their miſery in a deſert land, where they met with nothing but the melancholy marks of their own diſobedience. Their ideas of the happineſs, which they had juſt loſt, were freſh in their minds; and having now the experience of evils, which in the ſtate of innocence they had never known, they could not help making a compariſon between the two extremes. The firſt light of natural knowledge was not yet extinguiſhed in them; their notions of good and evil were more clear, than any man can now form; the more ſenſible therefore was their affliction to ſee themſelves ſo miſerably fallen from what they were. Their hearts were ready to burſt with grief at the proſpect of ſo many of their helpleſs children, who were eternally to periſh on their account. For having once conſented to the ſin, they could not poſſibly prevent the fatal conſequences of it. However exemplary their penance may have been, it could not of itſelf ſave either them or their children. The work of their ſalvation moreover required the grace and mediation of a God made man, whoſe merits ſhould be equally infinite with his mercy. This Jeſus Chriſt has done for them and us; and he has done it in ſo wonderful, and ſo plentiful a manner, that with the Church we may call the ſin of Adam in ſome ſort a neceſſary ſin and a fortunate tranſgreſſion. This is the Redemption, which our firſt parents hoped for; this was the thought, that comforted them in all their miſeries.

§ V. *Abel ſlain by his brother Cain. Gen. 4.*

A. M. 128, *Before J. C.* 3872. ADAM ſoon after his fall, began to increaſe his family; the firſt of his ſons was called Cain, and the ſecond was called Abel. Cain ſoon ſhowed himſelf to be of a very jealous temper, naturally rough and violent; he employed his time in working and tilling the ground. Abel was more meek; his natural turn of mind led him

to

to the more gentle exerciſes of piety in the employment of a ſhepherd. Both being inſtructed in the duties of religion, they both worſhiped the ſupreme Being by religious ſacrifice; the one offered to God the beſt and the fatteſt of his flocks, the other preſented him with the firſt-fruits and gifts of the earth. But as their offerings were made with very different diſpoſitions of the heart, ſo very different likewiſe was the acceptance they found in the divine ſight. It ſtung Cain to the very quick to ſee the preference given to his brother; his countenance fell, and a diſcontented gloom expreſſed the rancor of his heart. The piety of Abel was the great cauſe of his uneaſineſs, and a brother's good qualities, which he himſelf was wholly void of, ſtirred up his envy into a moſt violent hatred: it was the beginning of what has happened in every ſubſequent age of the Church, where the good and virtuous are obliged to bear the unjuſt cenſures and averſions of the wicked, with whom they converſe. God himſelf was pleaſed to ſpeak, in order to gain the heart of that wretched man. He aſked him, why he let himſelf be carried away by paſſion? Why he was caſt down, and why he fretted at what did not concern him? Thou art accountable only for thy own actions, ſaid God to him, whether good or evil: if they are good, thou ſhalt have thy reward; but if evil, thou alone muſt bear the guilt of thy ſin. The divine admonition was without its effect. For, as ſaint Gregory obſerves, the word of God, which is ſo ſovereign a remedy againſt every other diſtemper of the ſoul, cures not the ſecret wounds of envy: when applied to them, it does but exaſperate inſtead of healing. Cain had worked his paſſion up to its full height: being bent upon acts of violence, he invited his harmleſs and unſuſpecting brother to walk out with him into the fields, where he violently attacked and killed him upon the ſpot. Horrid as the action was, the murderer was too hardened in his guilt to be ſhocked at it. God ſoon after aſked him, what was become of Abel? He inſolently anſwered, that he did not know, neither was he his brother's guardian. But to convince him,

that nothing can eſcape the eye of an all-diſcerning Providence, God told him in reply, that the blood of his brother Abel cried to heaven for vengeance againſt him; that he ſhould therefore be accurſed upon the earth, that he ſhould ſhun the ſociety of men, and live a vagabond all the days of his life; giving an example to future ages of the vengeance due to all, who ſhall unjuſtly ſhed their innocent neighbour's blood, or by enmity murder him in their hearts.

The holy Fathers conſider the death of Abel, as a figure of the death of Jeſus Chriſt, and his ſufferings, as a beginning of thoſe perſecutions, which the faithful in all ages were to bear from their jealous brethren. Therefore the true followers of their divine Maſter are not afraid of being expoſed to the injuſtices of a perſecuting world, knowing that if their ſufferings are great, great alſo will be their reward; and that to repine at the firſt, would be to make themſelves unworthy of the ſecond.

§ VI. *Noah's ark. Gen. 6.*

A. M. 1556. *Before J. C.* 2444. THE deſcendants of Cain inherited their father's ſpirit, and became a very wicked race of men: the ſins of the earth increaſed in proportion with the number of its inhabitants. About the time of Abel's death, God had given to Adam another ſon, whom he named Seth, and whoſe deſcendants for their piety are in the holy Scripture called the ſons of God; till falling in love with women of the race of Cain, they alſo were corrupted like the reſt. In proceſs of time, their wickedneſs became ſo great and univerſal, that ſcarce any remains of virtue could be diſcovered in them. The marks of original righteouſneſs were either worn away by neglect, or diſfigured by vice. Man, the viſible maſterpiece of the creation, was ſo far degenerated from his firſt ſtate, that he ſeemed a diſgrace even to the creatures, that had been made for his uſe and benefit. The Lord repented, as the Scripture expreſſes it, and was ſorry for having

having made him: he reſolved to ſweep him off the face of the earth, and with him all the living creatures, that had been made for his ſervice. Amongſt ſo many thouſands of men, that were then living, only one was diſtinguiſhed for his innocent and ſpotleſs life. Noah was this man; who being in favour with his Creator, had the happineſs to be choſen by him for the reſtorer of a future race, when the firſt ſhould be deſtroyed. To Noah therefore did God communicate the reſolution, he had taken of deſtroying the world by an univerſal deluge; and, as he intended to ſhew mercy to him and his family, commanded him to build an ark, according to the dimenſions he then gave him. Noah ſet immediately to work, and was a hundred years in completing it. During that time men ſaw the preparations he was making, and could not be ignorant of his deſign: they undoubtedly heard the divine threat, but did not apprehend, it would fall ſo heavily: they conſidered it as a diſtant evil, and being wedded to their paſſions, either would not believe, or did not regard it.

Strange as the inſenſibility of thoſe antidiluvians may appear, it is no more, than what will again happen in the latter days, as our bleſſed Saviour tells us in his Goſpel. As ſuddenly, and unexpectedly as the deluge, the laſt judgment will likewiſe come upon the world. In compaſſion to mankind, almighty God threatens long beforehand, that the fear of puniſhment may make them ſtudious to prevent it: for he never puniſhes but with regret, and when the impenitence of ſinners provokes his ſevereſt anger. He cannot with indifference ſee his threats diſregarded, his admonitions ſlighted, and his mercy abuſed. Men muſt not fancy, that their numbers, or their wealth, or worldly power will be able to ſcreen them from the vengeance, that their crimes deſerve. When ſummoned to appear before the tribunal of an omnipotent Judge, they will find, that the whole world will be as little able to ſtand againſt the fires of the laſt day, as againſt the waters of the deluge.

§ VII. *The Deluge.* *Gen.* 6.

A. M. 1656. *Before J. C.* 2344. THE fatal period, fixt for purifying the earth by water, being at hand, God commanded Noah to take of every kind of bird and animal, male and female, ſeven couple of thoſe, that were clean, and one couple only of ſuch, as were unclean, and to convey them into the ark with proviſions of all ſorts ſufficient for a twelve-month. Theſe orders being executed, Noah and his wife, with his three ſons Sem, Cham, and Japhet, and their three wives, entered into the ark, and according to the Scripture phraſe, God faſtened cloſe the door on the outſide. At that moment the cataracts of heaven were opened, and an inceſſant deluge of rain was poured out with great violence for forty days and nights together. The earth ſoon diſappeared, the ſea was no longer diſtinguiſhed by any bounds, the inundation ſpread itſelf impetuouſly above every thing, till the ſurface of the waters was fifteen cubits higher than the higheſt mountains. Birds, animals, and men were ſwept away by the torrent, and lay buried beneath the deep; and, excepting what were in the ark, all periſhed without diſtinction. The ark in the mean time roſe with the riſing flood, and rode triumphant over the raging waters. Then did thoſe unhappy mortals, who had laughed at Noah's prudent forecaſt, moſt bitterly bewail their folly; with deep deſpair did they then ſee themſelves ſwallowed up by the reſiſtleſs waves, and the more ſenſibly did they feel the ſtroke of their deſtruction, as they had received the power and timely notice to prevent it.

The holy Fathers have conſidered the ark of Noah, as a figure of the Church of Chriſt, and in that view have learnedly commented not only upon the ſtateline ſs of its bulk, but alſo upon the aſſemblage of living creatures, that were contained within it. The Church, like the Ark, has triumphantly riſen above the ſtorms, that have been raiſed to depreſs her; by the activity and vigour of her founders ſhe has carried ſalvation even to the extremities

mities of the earth, whilſt by the vocation of the Gentiles ſhe aſſembles within her pale a collective body of believers from every tribe and nation beneath the ſun. This is the refuge, which all muſt flock to, who deſire to be ſaved; this is the ſanctuary, out of which no ſalvation can be found. For whoever does not believe, ſays our bleſſed Lord, will eternally periſh. Singular then has been the mercy of our Redeemer, who in preference to thouſands has not only taken us into the boſom of his Church, but has moreover given us the grace to know our happineſs therein. Without ſuch a grace we had, like the reſt, been borne down the torrent, which has deluged the world with vice and infidelity. By a merciful ſtroke of his ſpecial Providence, we have been cleanſed from ſin in the waters of Baptiſm, by his Croſs we have been reſcued from perdition, and thro' his merits we hope to enter the haven of eternal repoſe.

End of the firſt age.

Names and ages of the ten patriarchs of the firſt age.

		A. M.	died	aged
1	Adam	born	930	930
2	Seth	130	1042	912
3	Enos	235	1140	905
4	Cainan	325	1235	910
5	Malaleel	395	1290	895
6	Jared	460	1422	962
7	Enoch	622	987	365
8	Mathuſalem	687	1656	969
9	Lamech	874	1651	777
10	Noah	1057	2006	950

Second

Second age of the world.

From the Deluge 1657, to the vocation of Abraham, 2083; comprehending the ſpace of 426 years.

§ I. *Noah quits the ark: the rain-bow.* Gen. 8.

A. M. 1657, *Before J. C.* 2343. THE flood had continued in its full fury for a hundred and fifty days, when God was pleaſed to remember Noah and his companions in the ark. He put the wind into motion, which blowing ſteadily from one point, began to diſpel the clouds, and to drive the waters back to their ſource. The inundation viſibly decreaſed, and in the ſeventh month left the ark upon the top of mount Ararat, in Armenia. The ark there reſted for four months, when Noah being eager to know, whether the waters had ſubſided, opened the window and ſent out a crow: the crow, an unclean bird, and the emblem of an abandoned ſinner, returned no more into the ark: but the dove, which was ſent out ſeven days after, not finding any place to reſt upon, ſoon flew back, and was taken in again. At the end of ſeven days more, ſhe was ſent out a ſecond time, and in the evening came back, with a green olive-branch in her beak, which Noah joyfully received, not only as a proof, that the flood was abated, but likewiſe as a ſign, that God was now reconciled with the world. He opened the top of the ark, looked round and ſaw, that the waters had retired, and left the ſurface of the earth quite dry. By the command of God, he then went out of the ark, he and his wife and ſons, and every other living creature with them, after they had been ſhut up for a whole year. He no ſooner ſet his foot upon the dry land, but erected an altar, and offered to God a ſacrifice, in acknowledgment

of

of his ſpecial goodneſs towards him. God was pleaſed with Noah's gratitude, and accepted his ſacrifice. He bleſſed him and his children, telling them to re-people the earth, which he promiſed never to curſe again on account of the ſins of men. To convince them of the care he took of their future preſervation, he impreſſed an awe and fear of man upon the brute creation, and gave to Noah and his ſons a diſcretionary power over all living creatures, with permiſſion to uſe them, as they uſed the vegetables of the earth, for food and nouriſhment. He moreover entered into a ſolemn covenant with the holy Patriarch and his poſterity, and aſſigned the rain-bow, as a token of the peace between them. When you ſhall ſee my bow in the clouds, ſaid he, be then aſſured, that I am mindful of the contract, and of the promiſe, I have made, never to deſtroy the world again by another flood. And in effect no ſuch general calamity ſince that period has befallen mankind: tho' their heinous crimes have often cried, and ſtill cry aloud for vengeance, God nevertheleſs continues faithful to his word, nor will his promiſe ever fail. The rain-bow is a ſtanding ſign of his mercy towards us, and as often as that ſign appears, it ought to remind us of the gratitude we owe him. For his power is ſtill the ſame, nor is his arm abridged, tho' no longer exerted with the ſame viſible marks of terror.

It is not ſimply to the painted bow, which appears in a clouded ſky, that we are to confine our view; it is the Church, ſays ſaint Ambroſe, on which we are to fix our attention. Brilliant as the rain-bow in all its glory, the Church ſhoots her rays of brightneſs on every ſide thro' the clouds, that ſurround her. Thoſe brilliant rays are the various graces, with which God adorns his ſpouſe, and makes her ſhine ſo charming to the eyes of men. Faithful in her duty, ſhe receives them all, as the gifts of his divine goodneſs to her; ſhe bows to God, the author of her greatneſs; him ſhe adores as the ſun of juſtice, that enlightens and ſets her up, not only as a ſign, but as the mediatrix of peace between God and his people.

§ II. *Cham*

§ II. *Cham curſed by his father. Gen.* 9.

A. M. 1658, *Before J. C.* 2342. SCARCE had the effects of God's anger ceaſed upon the earth, when there happened an event, which ſhows, what little good is to be expected from man, when his heart is once corrupted, or governed only by ſervile fear. Of the three ſons of Noah, who had been ſo miraculouſly preſerved from the general wreck, there was one, who having firſt drawn upon himſelf the malediction of his father, merited alſo that of God; inſtead of being the head of a virtuous race, for which he had been preſerved, he became the author of a very unfortunate poſterity. Noah, ſeeing himſelf in the midſt of a ruined and diſpeopled country, applied himſelf to the works of huſbandry, and amongſt other rural employments, planted the vine. When the time of vintage came, he gathered and preſſed the grapes, drank freely of the juice, and intoxication was the conſequence, before he was aware of it. He fell aſleep in a poſture, as it happened, not decent to be ſeen, and lay uncovered in the middle of his tent. Cham, his ſecond ſon, and the father of Chanaan, was the firſt to diſcover him in that ſituation. Filial piety, one would think, ought to have prompted him to conceal, or at leaſt compaſſionate an aged father's diſgrace; but inſtead of that, he impudently laughed and diverted himſelf at what he ſaw. Nor was that all: he ran open-mouthed with it to Sem and Japhet, and invited them alſo to come and join in the diverſion. But they, more mindful of the reverence due to a parent, threw a mantle over their ſhoulders, and reſpectfully turning their faces a different way, covered in their father, what they could not innocently look at. Noah, as ſoon as he awoke, being informed of all, that had paſſed, condemned the action of Cham, and pronounced the curſe, which his ſon Chanaan was to inherit on that account. Chanaan, ſaid he, ſhall be a ſlave to the ſlaves of his brethren unto future generations; while for their piety, Sem and Japhet ſhall be bleſſed with a long and proſperous poſterity.

This

This ſtory in the literal meaning of the words, conveys a moſt important inſtruction for children to pay that honour and reſpect to their parents, which God commands them, and to be always careful not to laugh at, nor expoſe the private failings, they may diſcover in them: but in its figurative ſenſe, according to ſaint Auſtin, it inculcates to all Chriſtians a reſpect for Jeſus Chriſt, their true father, in his ſtate of humiliations and ſufferings. The bitter cup of affliction, which his heavenly Father gave him to drink, the fruit of that ungrateful vine, which he himſelf had planted, the nakedneſs and diſgrace, which accompanied him upon the Croſs, are all ſtrongly marked in the circumſtances of Noah's ſtory. And tho' few perhaps may be impious enough to laugh openly at the croſs and ignominies of Jeſus Chriſt, yet the number of thoſe, who by their worldly conduct throw that ſlight upon their ſuffering Redeemer, is not very ſmall. We in effect laugh at Chriſt, ſays the ſame holy Doctor, when by our actions we contradict the principles of our Chriſtian profeſſion, we deſpiſe the humiliations of Chriſt by indulging the pride of life; we ridicule in fine the ſufferings and the croſs of Chriſt, by ſhowing our contempt of thoſe, who are more profeſſedly the followers of his footſteps, and the imitators of his patience.

§ III. *The Tower of Babel. Gen.* 11.

THE deſcendants of Noah ſoon became very numerous: in the ſpace of about a ſingle century they were ſo ſurpriſingly increaſed, that the country they were in, was too ſcanty for their numbers. Being obliged to extend their territories, they began to look out for new ſettlements in different parts of the globe Before their ſeparation they propoſed leaving ſome monument behind them, that might make their memory famous in after ages. With that view they undertook to build a city, and in it to erect a tower, the top whereof might *A. M.* 1757, *Before J. C.* 2243

reach to heaven. Their intention was not merely to ſignalize their name, but to provide themſelves moreover with a place of ſecurity againſt any future deluge, that might happen. Extravagant as the project was, they ſeemed nevertheleſs determined to effect it. They ſet immediately to work; upon the conceited notions of human pride they fooliſhly laid the foundations of their own diſgrace, and wickedly attempted to raiſe themſelves above the reach of being ſtopt or awed from ſin by the fear of puniſhment. God fixed his eye upon thoſe buſy ſons of Adam, looked down upon the tower, they were labouring at, and ſaw how bent they were upon finiſhing it. At that time they all ſpoke the ſame language, and thereby encouraged one another in their impious undertaking. Full of that thought, they did not conſider, from whom they had received the gift of ſpeech, or that it was as eaſy for the Almighty to take away, as it was to give. By a ſtroke of the divine power they in a moment loſt their uniformity of accent, and were ſurpriſed to hear nothing but a confuſed and diſcordant ſound of words, which no one underſtood. The diſorderly noiſe and tumult, that enſued upon it, forced them to deſiſt, and the tower they had begun, was on that account, called the Tower of Babel, or confuſion.

That tower of confuſion, ſays Saint Bernard, is the figure of all ſuch worldly projects, as preſumptuous mortals were to form thro' every age in oppoſition to the commands of God. More pleaſed with the appearance, than with the reality of being truly great, men often ſet aſide the ſubſtance of real good, and toil after the ſhadow of they know not what. God in this inſtance ſhowed his diſpleaſure at the preſumption of men by puniſhing them in that ſlippery part the tongue, which was, and ſtill continues to be, the active inſtrument of ſin. That diverſity of languages, which then began, and ſtill ſubſiſts between nations, is as it were a continual voice, that makes itſelf be heard over the whole earth, and intimates to all, ſays Saint Auſtin, that the ſhorteſt and the ſureſt way to heaven is not in building lofty edifices to their vanity, nor in forming vaſt projects in the mind, but

but in humbly ſubmitting to the decrees of God; not in pretending to elude his juſtice by an obſtinate reſiſtance, but in endeavouring to deſerve his mercy by a timely repentance.

End of the ſecond age.

Names and ages of the ten Patriarchs of the ſecond age.

A. M.		born	died	aged.
1	Sem	1558	2158	600
2	Arphaxad	1658	1996	338
3	Sale	1693	2126	433
4	Heber	1723	2187	464
5	Phaleg	1757	1996	239
6	Rehu	1787	2026	239
7	Sarug	1819	2049	230
8	Nachor	1849	1997	148
9	Thare	1878	2083	205
10	Abraham	2008	2183	175

Third

Third age of the world.

From the vocation of Abraham 2083, to the delivery of the Hebrew people out of Egypt 2513; comprehending the ſpace of 430 years.

§ I. *Vocation of Abraham. Gen.* 12.

A. M. 2083, *Before J. C.* 1917. FROM the diſperſion of mankind into different parts of the univerſe, is dated the origin of the different ſtates and kingdoms, that were then formed by their enterprizing leaders. Being no longer awed by the preſence of their Patriarchs, they ſoon forgot the principles, and laid aſide the practice of the religion, they had been inſtructed in. Inſtead of God, men began to worſhip creatures, in which they fancied a divinity to reſide. A corruption of morals became almoſt univerſal, and the true religion remained but with a few of the deſcendants of Sem, and they were chiefly of the branch of Heber. Idolatry had begun to ſpread itſelf even amongſt them, when God was pleaſed to ſelect to himſelf a man more deſerving, than the reſt, whom he deſtined to be the founder of a more faithful race. This extraordinary man was called Abraham, the tenth in a lineal deſcent from Noah, and lived with his father Thare, in Ur, a city of the Chaldeans. Here it was, that God appeared and imparted his orders to him. Go forth from thy native country, ſays the Almighty; quit thy kindred and thy father's houſe, and paſs into the land, that I will ſhew thee. Thee I will make the father and the head of a great people, and thy name ſhall be famous amongſt them. Thoſe, that ſhall bleſs thee, I will bleſs, and thoſe, that ſhall curſe thee, will I likewiſe curſe; and in thee

ſhall all the nations of the earth be bleſſed. Abraham gave implicit credit to the words he heard, and immediately prepared to execute the divine order. He communicated it to his wife and father, who agreed to go along with him. He therefore bade an eternal adieu to the place, that gave him birth, and began his journey towards the country, that God had pointed out to him. Lot, his brother's ſon, was one of the company. Abraham advanced as far as Haran, a city of Meſopotamia, where he ſeems to have made ſome ſtay. There it was, he buried his father; after which he proceeded in his journey towards the land of Chanaan. Upon his arrival thither, God renewed to him his former promiſe of putting him in poſſeſſion of all that country. Abraham erected an altar upon the ſpot, and adored that ſovereign Power, which bids the empire of nations riſe or fall, as it pleaſes to direct. He had not been long in the country, before a raging famine obliged him to leave it, and to retreat into Egypt. But whilſt he retreated from one danger, he became apprehenſive of periſhing by another. The comlineſs of Sarah's perſon, he thought, would tempt the men of Egypt to make away with the huſband, that they may take the wife. For that reaſon, he deſired her to ſay, ſhe was his ſiſter, as in effect ſhe might, without any injury to truth. The event quickly ſhowed, that Abraham was not wrong in his conjectures. For the Egyptians no ſooner ſaw Sarah, but were taken with her beauty, and deſcribed her to Pharaoh, their king. Pharaoh ſent for her to his palace, with an intention of making her his wife; ordering at the ſame time, that every mark of civility ſhould be paid to Abraham her brother. Sarah was in a very critical ſituation, which muſt have ended in her ſhame, if God himſelf had not been the guardian of her purity. By the moſt convincing proofs of his anger, he made Pharaoh ſenſible of the wrong he had done, and that the woman, he had forced into his palace, was the wife of Abraham. Pharaoh upon this, ordered Abraham to be brought before him, and without making him any other complaint, than that of his not having at firſt told him, that Sarah was his

wife,

wife, bade him take her, and go his ways. So totally averſe to the crime of adultery was this prince, altho' an idolater, ſays ſaint Ambroſe, and ſo tender was he of a ſtranger's honour, with whom he had no other connexion, than that of his having taken refuge within his dominions!

Thus it was, that God called to himſelf the man, whom he had choſen to be the father of all true believers, and ſuch were the firſt proofs he made of the ſteadineſs of his faith. He commanded him to quit every advantage, which he had been born to in his native country, and to go into a foreign land, where at his very firſt entrance he had all the hardſhips of a ſevere famine to ſtruggle againſt. Being again forced to abandon the place he had been directed to, he retired into an idolatrous kingdom, where, amidſt a thouſand frights, he ran a thouſand riſks, without any other comfort, than that of having been obedient to Him, who was pleaſed to make that trial of his faith. But by experience he was in the end convinced, that he had nothing to fear under the immediate protection of a God, who knows how to turn to our advantage all thoſe paſſing inconveniencies which we patiently ſubmit to, rather than give up our allegiance to him.

§ II. *Lot leaves Abraham.* *Gen.* 13.

ABRAHAM ſtaid no longer in Egypt than neceſſity obliged him: he came back into the country, which he had left the year before, and fixed his reſidence near Bethel. He had not been long there, when he began to experience a misfortune, which is but too often the attendant of wealth. Both he and his nephew were poſſeſſed of great riches, which conſiſted chiefly in their numerous herds and flocks. Many ſervants were of courſe employed in taking care of them, and where different intereſts prevail, diſputes and diſagreements will neceſſarily ariſe. Abraham, who was naturally of a very pacific turn of mind, being apprehenſive of the evil conſequences *A. M.* 2084, *Before J. C.* 1916.

quences, that were likely to enſue from ſuch domeſtic wrangles, judged it the more prudent part to propoſe to his nephew a timely ſeparation, before the quarrel ſhould ſpread from the ſervants to their maſters. He went to find out Lot, and begged, that as they were brethren, there might be no miſunderſtanding between them, and that every ſubject of complaint between their ſervants might be inſtantly removed. Behold, ſaid he, the country is open to your choice; take the part you like beſt: if you chuſe to go to the left, I will take the right; or if you prefer the right, I will then retire to the left. Diſcreet and friendly was the propoſal, as made by Abraham; but on the part of Lot, there appeared neither the ſame friendſhip nor diſcretion. Inattentive to his uncle's goodneſs, and inſenſible of the loſs, that he was likely to ſuffer by ſuch a ſeparation, he eagerly catched at the offer, that was made him, and ſo blindly threw himſelf, as ſaint Ambroſe obſerves, into numberleſs perils and misfortunes. For the deſire of a preſent advantage ſeems to have excluded every other conſideration. Lot fixed his eye upon the country, that lay round the borders of the river Jordan. The freſhneſs of its verdure, and the richneſs of its ſoil, watered with the moſt pleaſing ſtreams, gave it all the appearance of a delightful garden. The proſpect was inviting; it excited his deſire; it induced him to ſeparate from the moſt holy perſonage then living, and to ſettle in the midſt of a people, the moſt abandoned and infamous for their luſts: he ſettled in the town of Sodom.

From this ſtory, ſhort as it is, ſays the ſame ſaint Ambroſe, we may gather two very important inſtructions. In the conduct of Abraham we ſee, how very cautious we ought to be not to enter into any diſpute, that may leſſen fraternal charity, and how ſuſpected ought to be the whiſpers of ſervants, whoſe ſelfiſh views often raiſe complaints and jealouſies of one another. In the example of Lot we diſcover, of what dangerous conſequence it is, for young perſons eſpecially, to break off with a ſincere and judicious friend: his advice is oftentimes more eſſential to their happineſs, than they imagine. A

virtuous

virtuous friendſhip is the ſource of bleſſings, which are not always attended to: one haſty ſtep inconſiderately taken, is frequently productive of evils, that are felt for life. Tho' Lot was a juſt man, as ſaint Peter teſtifies, yet we cannot but tremble for him, when on the one hand we ſee him ſtruggling with difficulties, which his imprudence had engaged him in, and on the other, bereft of the only man, who by his preſence either might have prevented the evils he fell into, or taught him how to ſurmount them.

§ III. *Abraham delivers Lot. Gen.* 14.

A. M. 2092. *Before J. C.* 1908. SOON after Lot had ſeparated from Abraham, there happened an event, which at once evinced the charity of the one, and the imprudence of the other. Four kings, it ſeems, had united their forces together, and made an incurſion into the neighbourhood of Sodom, laying waſte and plundering all before them. In order to make head againſt them, the king of Sodom ſolicited the aſſiſtance of four other petty princes, who readily accepted of the propoſal, and in one body marched out againſt the common enemy: they came to an engagement, were defeated, and put to flight. The four confederate kings being greatly elated with their victory, and having nothing more to oppoſe them, directed their march to Sodom, which they took and plundered. Lot ſhared in the common calamity; his effects were pillaged, and he himſelf carried off amongſt the priſoners. Fortunately for him, a meſſenger had eſcaped from the field of battle, and carried the news of his captivity to Abraham. The virtuous Patriarch was grievouſly afflicted at what had happened, and concluding it to be no time for tears and inactive complaints, immediately collected all the force he could, and armed three hundred and eighteen of the moſt reſolute of his dependants. With that little troop he went in purſuit of the victorious enemy; and as it was upon the divine power, that he chiefly relied for

for ſucceſs, God was pleaſed to give a bleſſing to his arms, and to crown his courage with victory. He came up with the enemy, attacked and defeated their army, which the united force of five princes had not been able to cope with. Having broken their lines, he purſued them in their flight, and reſcued Lot with all the other priſoners, that had been carried off from Sodom.

It was on this occaſion, that he was met by Melchiſedech, the king of Salem, and prieſt of the moſt high God, as the Scripture calls him. This extraordinary man ſacrificed in bread and wine, which the holy Fathers unanimouſly exhibit as a figure of that wonderful ſacrifice, which Jeſus Chriſt, the true prieſt according to the order, not of Aaron but of Melchiſedech, was to inſtitute and ordain to be performed in his Church, as long as the world ſhould laſt. He gave his bleſſing to Abraham, and rendered thanks to God for having given him victory over his enemies. The king of Sodom was exceedingly rejoiced at this unexpected turn of his affairs, and with a due ſenſe of gratitude inſiſted upon Abraham's taking home with him the rich booty, that he had recovered from the enemy. But Abraham, being as diſintereſted in his views, as he had been ſucceſsful in his enterprize, generouſly refuſed the offer, and in the moſt ſolemn manner declared, that of the ſpoils he would not take ſo much as a ſingle thread, nor put it into any man's power to ſay, that he had enriched Abraham.

Thus did Abraham, as ſaint Ambroſe remarks, become more glorious by the uſe he made of his victory, than by the victory itſelf. His example is an inſtruction to all Chriſtians, that the motive of exerting their courage ſhould be always founded in charity; that a tender compaſſion for the ſufferings of others ſhould make them active in their relief; that the beſt recompence of a good action is the merit of having performed it; and that the greateſt glory of a Chriſtian is to have co-operated with the deſigns of God for the benefit of mankind.

§ IV. *The flight of Agar. Gen.* 16.

A. M. 2093, *Before J. C.* 1907. ABRAHAM ſeemed to be at the heigth of his temporal felicity; an heir to his great riches was the only thing wanting to make him completely happy. The great deſire, he had of ſo happy an event, could be only equalled by his humble reſignation to the divine will, and that reſignation made him worthy of the bleſſing, he ſo earneſtly wiſhed for. In a viſion God expreſsly told him, he ſhould have a ſon, tho' at that time there was not the leaſt probable appearance of it: for Sarah was not only barren, ſhe was moreover far advanced in years. Abraham was too well principled in faith, not to ſubmit his judgment to the divine word; he knew the power and veracity of Him, who ſpoke, to be equally great, ſo could not form the leaſt doubt of the promiſed bleſſing. But to Sarah the time ſeemed long; ſhe ſaw no ſign of her having a ſon, and her huſband was growing old; ſhe therefore begged him to take the Egyptian Agar, her handmaid, to wife, and thereby conſole them both for her paſt ſterility. However ſingular the propoſal may ſeem, Abraham knew, as the holy Fathers obſerve, that it had its ſanction from heaven, and therefore gave his conſent. The event did not anſwer Sarah's expectation; for what ſhe intended to be her comfort, became a new ſubject of uneaſineſs. Agar ſeeing herſelf honoured by her maſter, began to deſpiſe her miſtreſs, and to ſet herſelf above her. Sarah complained of it to Abraham; and he, to convince her, that he was far from encouraging any ſuch inſolence of behaviour, adviſed her to exert her authority, and to inſiſt upon the reſpect, which is due from a ſervant to her miſtreſs. Sarah wanted nothing more: ſhe ſtretched her authority to the utmoſt; ſhe carried her correction to a degree of harſhneſs and ſeverity not to be borne with. Agar would no longer ſubmit, left the houſe, and fled off into the wide country. There, in the depth of her affliction, ſhe ſat herſelf down near a fountain, where an angel of the Lord appeared

appeared to her, and aſked, from whence ſhe came, and whither ſhe was going. She anſwered, with great ſinterity, that ſhe was flying from the anger of her miſtreſs. The Angel commanded her to go back, to make her ſubmiſſion to Sarah, and to reſpect the juſt authority that her miſtreſs had over her.

In this manner did God employ an Angel to bring things back into their natural order, out of which the hurry of paſſion had firſt thrown them. He ſaw, as the holy Fathers take notice, that the cauſe of Agar's flight aroſe not ſo much from Sarah's ſeverity, as from her own perverſe temper: wherefore, without caſting any blame upon Sarah, the Angel directed his advice ſolely to Agar, telling her to humble herſelf at her miſtreſs's feet, and to regain her good graces by a ſubmiſſive and chearful obedience. For God, who never breaks through the order eſtabliſhed by his juſtice, always requires, that the inferior claſs of mankind pay a due deference to thoſe, on whom they depend. No natural abilities or talents, however great, can authoriſe an inſult againſt any lawful ſuperior; the greater the gifts are, that we have received from God, the greater ſhould be our humility and our gratitude; for in the divine ſight no man is great, but in proportion as he is little in his own.

§ V. *Abraham entertains the three Angels.* Gen. 18.

AGAR, ſoon after her return into Abraham's houſe in the vale of Mambre, was brought to bed of a ſon, who was called Iſmael. At the end of thirteen years, God appeared again to Abraham, renewed all his former promiſes, and entered into a more expreſs covenant with him. He changed his name of Abram into Abraham, and told him, that his wife, who had hitherto been called Sarai, ſhould hence forward be called Sarah. He then enjoined him the law of circumciſion, which he commanded him and his poſterity to obſerve, as a ſign of that ſacred covenant, which he had juſt ratified between them.

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For he plainly told him, that Sarah ſhould have a ſon, whom he would bleſs, and from whom a numerous race of kings and people ſhould deſcend. At hearing this, Abraham fell proſtrate upon the ground, and laughing with joy aſked himſelf, if it were poſſible for a man a hundred years old to have a ſon, or for Sarah to conceive in the ninetieth year of her age? God repeatedly aſſured him it ſhould be ſo, and then left him. In a promiſe ſo explicit on the part of God, Abraham could no longer doubt the event, eſpecially as he ſoon after received a further confirmation of it, in the following manner. During the heat of the day, he happened to be ſitting at the door of his tent, and by chance looking round, he beheld three Angels, in the appearance of men, coming towards him. He immediately roſe up, and advanced to meet them. It was an indiſpenſable duty with him, it ſeems, never to let a ſtranger paſs, without offering him hoſpitality. He ſaluted his three viſiters with all that courteſy and candid ſimplicity, which beſpeaks a good heart, offered them his ſervice, begged they would let him waſh their feet, and preſent them with a refreſhment. Upon their accepting his offer, he ſtept back into his tent, and deſired Sarah to prepare three hearth-cakes; then haſtening to the herd, he choſe out a fat and tender calf, which he ordered his ſervant to kill, and dreſs with all expedition. His orders were ſpeedily performed, and the entertainment ſerved up under a tree, Abraham ſtanding the whole time, and helping his gueſts to whatever they wanted. When they had done, they enquired after his wife Sarah, and he anſwering, that ſhe was within her tent, they aſſured him, that by the time they came that way again, ſhe ſhould have a ſon. Sarah was near enough to hear what they ſaid, and laughed ſecretly behind the door of the tent. Upon that, one of the Angels, addreſſing himſelf to Abraham, aſked, what Sarah meant by laughing as ſhe did? Whether ſhe diſbelieved the promiſe, or fancied any thing was difficult to God? Sarah began to be afraid, and denied her having laughed. The Angels told her ſhe had, gave her a gentle reprimand for her

unſincerity,

unſincerity, roſe up, and departed towards Sodom. Abraham accompanied them part of the way.

The holy Fathers ſeem particularly delighted with the virtues, that ſhine forth in the detail of this hiſtory. On the one hand, they ſeem at a loſs for words to expreſs their commendation of Abraham's benevolent hoſpitality; and on the other, they diſplay all their eloquence in extolling the unaffected modeſty of Sarah. Very unlike to many of her ſex, who under the pretext of charity, ſays ſaint Ambroſe, ſeek but an occaſion of ſhining in public, ſhe remained private in her apartment, without ſo much as appearing before the ſtrangers, that her huſband was entertaining. From her example, every Chriſtian woman ought to know, adds the ſame Saint, that domeſtic retirement, and the conſtant care of her family conſtitute the chief duty of a virtuous wife.

§ VI. *Crimes of Sodom.*

THE three Angels diſcourſed in a moſt familiar manner with Abraham, as they went along: they firſt ſpoke of the great bleſſings, which from him ſhould flow upon all the nations of the earth, and then told him they were going to deſtroy the town of Sodom, in puniſhment of its crimes, that cried to Heaven for vengeance. Abraham began to expoſtulate with them, and hoped they would not involve the innocent at leaſt with the guilty. His charitable entreaties ſo far prevailed, as to engage their promiſe not to deſtroy the town, provided ten juſt perſons could be found therein: but Sodom had them not. Abraham and the Angels took leave of one another: he returned home, and they went on towards Sodom. Two of them reached the town about evening, and found Lot ſitting at the gate. Lot ſtill retained the principles of his virtuous education, and in the midſt of a corrupt people preſerved that purity of manners, which he had learnt from Abraham. He no ſooner perceived the two ſtrangers, but roſe up to ſalute them: he invited them *A. M.* 2107.

them to his houſe, and preſſed them to ſtay all night, that they might be freſh for their journey next day. The Angels at firſt ſeemed to make ſome difficulty of accepting his invitation, and ſaid they would remain in the open ſtreet. Lot would admit of no excuſe, compelled them to enter under his roof, and gave them a very hoſpitable reception. When they had ſupped, and were retiring to reſt, a lawleſs croud of the townſmen, being inflamed with an unnatural luſt of ſin, ſurrounded the houſe, and clamorouſly demanded to have the two young men, that were within, given up to them. Lot was grieved to the heart to find his gueſts thus expoſed to an inſult, from which he was in hopes they had been ſecure under the ſhelter of his roof. He went out to the Sodomites, and by meek entreaties tried to diſſuade them from their brutal deſign. They anſwered his repreſentations with great inſolence of language, bade him remember, that he was but a ſtranger himſelf, and by no means qualified to adviſe or direct them. They grew exceſſively outrageous, were near forcing their way into Lot's houſe, and threatened the rudeſt violence to his perſon, when the Angels put forth their hand to his aſſiſtance, and drew him within the door, which they inſtantly faſtened againſt the mob, caſting at the ſame time ſuch a miſt upon their eyes, that they could neither ſee nor find the way in after him.

Like unto this is the uſage, and ſuch is the violence, which has been frequently experienced by the faithful ſervants of God, who live in the midſt of a corrupt and unbelieving world. To the ſhameleſs Sodomites, blinded as they were, and perſiſting in their attempt of breaking into Lot's houſe, ſaint Gregory compares thoſe wicked ſlanderers, who never ceaſe to inſult the faireſt characters. Hurried away by the ſpirit of malevolence, they are blind to their neighbour's good qualities, and fancy to themſelves defects, which have no exiſtence but in the wildneſs of their own imagination. As for thoſe, whoſe misfortune it is to be thus traduced by the tongue of ſlander, God is their protector, and his holy Angels are their guardians. For by the choice they make of

prefering virtue to vice, and duty to falſe friendſhip, they ſecure to themſelves a friend in God, who is both able and willing to ſupport them in their utmoſt need.

§ VII. *Sodom conſumed by fire.* *Gen.* 19.

THE Angels, having thus delivered Lot from the violence of a licentious mob, declared to him the commiſſion, they had to deſtroy Sodom and its inhabitants: they deſired him to inform his ſons and daughters, or any other perſons, who were dependent on or connected with him, to leave the town immediately, for fear of being involved with the reſt of the citizens, whoſe abominations were no longer to be tolerated. Lot gave notice to the two young men, whom he had deſigned for his ſons-in-law, and adviſed them to quit the ſinful city: they laughed at his advice, and treated it as a mere dream. Morning being come, the Angels preſſed Lot to depart with his wife and two daughters; for Lot was dilatory, and ſeemingly unwilling to move. They therefore took him by the hand, and led him out of the town, expreſsly cautioning both him and his wife and daughters, not to look back, but to retire with all ſpeed into the mountain. Lot was afraid of going to the mountain, and begged leave to retreat into the neighbouring town of Segor: the Angels conſented to his requeſt upon condition, that he would make haſte thither, becauſe they could not execute their orders, till he ſhould be in a place of ſafety. Lot was no ſooner arrived at Segor, but God let fall a ſhower of fire and brimſtone upon Sodom and Gomorrha, and two other towns, which with all their inhabitants, and the country round were entirely conſumed. Lot's wife, being terrified at the noiſe, unfortunately forgot the caution, that the Angel had given her, and looked back at the town. Her curioſity was puniſhed upon the ſpot: ſhe was changed into a pillar of ſalt, to ſerve as a warning to thoſe, who from fear or fickleneſs of mind, ſhall at any time caſt a wiſhful

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wiſhful look at the ſinful objects, they have once quitted. Struck at ſo terrible an inſtance of the divine juſtice, Lot began to tremble for the fate of Segor, and concluded he ſhould be more ſafe in the mountain, that the Angel had at firſt pointed out to him: thither he then haſtened, with his two daughters, and concealed himſelf for ſome time in a cave.

Thus, thro' the efficacy of Abraham's prayer, Lot was miraculouſly delivered from the ſulphureous flames of Sodom: the puniſhment of that infamous people was adapted to the nature of their crimes. The ſtench and fury of the flames, kindled for no other purpoſe than to puniſh, gives us a ſtriking figure, according to ſaint Gregory, of thoſe eternal fires, which are reſerved for impenitent ſinners in the world to come: yet, dreadful as thoſe burnings are, they frequently are no more conſidered, than if they were but an empty dream. Senſeleſs, as the ſons-in-law of Lot, men often laugh at the threats they hear, and diſregard the danger, that is hanging over their heads. If that example of the divine vengeance appeared to Lot ſo grievous and dreadful, can ſinners ſtand unmoved, and unconcernedly hear Jeſus Chriſt aſſuring them, that the inhabitants of Sodom, abominable as they were, will in the laſt day be treated with leſs ſeverity than they, who ſhall have heard and not profited by his holy word.

§ VIII. *Puniſhment of king Abimelech. Gen.* 20.

A. M. 2107, *Before J. C.* 1893. SOON after the deſtruction of Sodom, and in the ſame year, Abraham quitted his former place of reſidence in the vale of Mambre, and removed to the town of Gerara, in the ſouthern part of the country. Here the beauty of his wife expoſed him to the ſame danger from Abimelech, that he had once experienced from Pharaoh. Abimelech was the king of Gerara, and had an inclination to make Sarah his wife, upon the preſumption, that ſhe was only Abraham's ſiſter. But God, who had undertaken

dertaken to be the protector of the virtuous pair, even againſt the attempt of kings, admoniſhed Abimelech in the night, that ſhe was Abraham's wife, and threatened him with inſtant death, if he preſumed to touch her. Terrified at the unexpected threat, Abimelech began to plead the uprightneſs of his intention, and hoped his ignorance would recommend him to the divine mercy. Almighty God received his excuſe, and aſſured him, that on account of his ſimplicity, he had preſerved his hands from ſin, nor permitted him to do an action, which his heart abhorred. It was the dead of the night: Abimelech was ſtruck beyond expreſſion at the thought of his having been ſo near the fatal precipice: he ſtarted ſuddenly out of bed, called his officers round him, and related to them the whole adventure. He ſent immediately for Abraham, to whom he made his complaint for having deceived him. For what reaſon, ſaid he, did you not impart to me the whole truth? and why was I to be left in ignorance? what injury, what provocation had you received, thus to expoſe me and my people to the hazard of being curſed for an adultery, which as we abhor, we never intended to commit? Abraham replied, that in this he had not acted contrary to his uſual cuſtom; that in deſiring Sarah to paſs for his ſiſter, he had not offended againſt the truth; that being unacquainted with their manners, when he came amongſt them, he did not know, whether they had any fear of God, and was therefore afraid of being murdered by them, had he moreover declared her to be his wife. Abimelech ſeemed ſatisfied with his reaſons, gave him back his wife, and made him rich preſents, both in cattle and in money. In taking his leave of Sarah he told her with a ſmile, that he had given a thouſand pieces of ſilver to her brother, as ſhe called him, to buy her a veil, which he adviſed her to wear for the future, as a diſtinctive mark, ſays ſaint Ambroſe, of her being a married woman: he deſired her to remember, how her deceit had been diſcovered, and bade her be careful, how ſhe attempted the like again upon any other man. Abraham ſpoke in his turn, and finiſhed with a prayer to God, who in conſequence thereof

exempted Abimelech and his family from the puniſhment, which they had otherwiſe undergone on the account of Sarah.

In this manner, as Saint Ambroſe obſerves, did God teſtify his abhorrence of adultery. Being the protector, as well as the author of matrimony, he ſeverely puniſhes, whatever tends to violate its ſanctity, or to defile its purity. And tho' the effects of his vengeance may not now a days be ſo ſudden or ſo viſible, as they formerly were, yet it is not to be imagined, that his hatred of the crime can be leſs now, than it was of old, or that his puniſhment of it is to be leſs dreaded, becauſe leſs viſible. The licentiouſneſs of men may make the ſin more common or more glaring at one time, than at another; but the judgments of God are at all times equally juſt, and equally to be feared.

§ IX. *Iſmael turned out of doors. Gen. 21.*

A. M. 2108. *Before J. C.* 1892. Conformably to the Angel's promiſe Sarah brought forth a ſon, whom his father circumciſed on the eighth day, as God had commanded, and called him Iſaac. Notwithſtanding the diſtinguiſhed rank ſhe held in the world, on account of her huſband's wealth and eminent virtues, ſhe ſuckled her own child, and in that, ſays Saint Ambroſe, has given an admirable example to all ſuch mothers, who upon ſome frivolous pretence or other often ſeek to exempt themſelves from a duty, which nature herſelf has impoſed upon them: to nouriſh with her milk the tender offspring of her body, ſhould be the glory and the joy of every mother; and they, who decline it, can be conſidered in no better light, than that of being but half parents to their children, ſince at the breaſt is imbibed and ſtrengthened that mutual love, which ſhould ſubſiſt for life between a mother and her children. Sarah weaned her ſon, when he was of a proper age, and Abraham expreſſed great joy on the occaſion. It was a day of mirth and entertainment for the whole family,

and

and ſtands recorded, as an emblem of that ſpiritual joy, which the paſtors of the Church experience, when they ſee their tender flock advance in virtue, and grow ſuſceptible of more ſolid food. Sarah was become one of the happieſt of her ſex; the reproach of her long ſterility was wiped away, and all the bleſſings of a mother united in her. The ſmiling Iſaac increaſed her joy, as he increaſed in age, till Iſmael's behaviour towards him began to give her great uneaſineſs. Iſmael, who had been long flattered as an only child, and had been taught to look upon himſelf, as the preſumptive heir of Abraham's great riches, ſaw his hopes cut off at once by the birth of Iſaac. A diſappointment of that nature muſt conſequently affect both Iſmael and his mother Agar; the joy moreover and partiality, that was ſhown to Iſaac, naturally provoked Iſmael's jealouſy, and prompted him to vent his ſpleen and ill humour againſt his little brother. Sarah's fondneſs for an only ſon, made her too ſharp-ſighted not to obſerve what paſſed between them, and being apprehenſive of the conſequences, deſired Abraham to ſtop the evil at once, by turning the handmaid and her ſon out of doors, aſſuring him, that the handmaid's ſon ſhould never ſhare in the inheritance with her ſon Iſaac. The good Patriarch was much hurt at the propoſal, for he loved his ſon Iſmael. But being warned by almighty God to act in this matter as Sarah ſhould direct, he took a loaf of bread and a bottle of water, which he laid upon Agar's ſhoulder, delivered to her her ſon, and diſmiſſed her. Agar in that forlorn condition, being turned out of doors, wandered about the wilderneſs of Berſabee for ſome time, till her little proviſion was conſumed. Her diſtreſs became extreme; ſhe had no reſource left for the preſervation either of herſelf or ſon, and abandoned herſelf to diſpair. She placed her ſon under a tree there to wait for death, then retiring as far as a bow can carry, not to ſee him die, ſhe ſat herſelf down upon the ground, raiſed a mournful cry, and wept moſt bitterly. In that melancholy ſituation, ſhe ſuddenly heard a voice, that called her by her name. It was the voice of an angel commanding her to

take care of Iſmael, for that he ſhould be the father of a numerous people. The Angel pointed out to her a fountain, that was near; ſhe was much comforted, ſhe educated her ſon in the wilderneſs, who in proceſs of time became an expert archer, and married a woman of Egypt.

Saint Paul expreſsly tells us, that in the picture of theſe two ſons of Abraham is clearly repreſented, what was in after times to happen to Chriſt's Church, in which the children of promiſe were to ſuffer perſecution from their own brethren. Whoever would inherit the bleſſings of Iſaac, muſt with him bear the envy and the inſults of Iſmael; far from returning evil for evil, he ought rather to deplore the misfortune of a brother, who for his own demerits is for ever baniſhed from his father's houſe. It is God alone, who in his wiſdom has decreed the one to be born of her, who is free; and another to be born of her, who is a ſlave. It is a duty incumbent upon us, who are free, to thank our heavenly Father for the decree he has paſſed in our favour; and we muſt be ready to ſubmit with Iſaac to any perſecution whatever, rather than become like Iſmael, the perſecutors of our brethren: the wrath of Iſmael was but ſhort, the inheritance of Iſaac is everlaſting.

§ X. *Abraham's ſacrifice. Gen.* 22.

A. M. 2145, *Before J. C.* 1855. ISMAEL's baniſhment reſtored peace to Abraham's family, and left Iſaac the indiſputable heir of his father's fortune. Iſaac had reached the thirty-ſeventh year of his age, according to the Jewiſh tradition, when God was pleaſed to make trial of Abraham's faith in a point the moſt deciſive: He ordered him to take that very Iſaac, his beloved ſon, and to offer him in ſacrifice upon the mountain, he ſhould ſhow him. Abraham had always looked upon his ſon as a ſpecial gift from God, and therefore did not heſitate a ſingle moment to give him back in the manner, that God required. He had been

been assured, that his posterity should one day become as numerous, as the sands upon the shore, or as the stars in heaven. Stedfast therefore in that belief, and unshaken in his hope, Abraham stifled every doubt he might otherwise have formed of the repeated promises, God had made him: He rose early in the morning, and keeping his secret to himself, went silently out with Isaac and two servants. He carried with him the wood necessary to consume the holocaust, and directed his way towards the mountain. Fixt in his resolution, he went on for two days, and on the third came in sight of the destined place of sacrifice. He told his servants to remain at the bottom of the hill, while he with his son should go up to adore their God. Inflexible to the sensations of flesh and blood, he took in his hand the fire and the sword, and gave to his son the wood, that was intended for the sacred fire. Charged with his load, Isaac proceeded up the hill, a lively representative of Him, who was afterwards to ascend the mount of Calvary loaded with a cross, on which he was to consummate the great work of our Redemption. As they were going on, Isaac asked his father, where the victim was? The question was too interesting not to waken all the tenderness of a father's love in such circumstances: Abraham dissembled the secret feelings of his heart, and with a manly firmness answered, that God would provide the victim. Being come to the appointed spot, he erected an altar, and laid the wood in order upon it; then having bound and placed his son Isaac thereon, he took up the sword, and stretched out his hand to strike. The firm obedience of the father, and the humble submission of the son, was all that God required of them. An Angel at the moment was dispatched to stop the father's arm, and to assure him, that God was satisfied with the readiness of his obedience. The Angel called aloud on Abraham: Abraham answered the voice, and looking round saw a ram with his horns entangled in the brambles, which he took and offered an holocaust for his son.

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This hiſtory, which is ſo myſterious, and in almoſt every circumſtance ſo reſembling the paſſages of our Saviour's paſſion, is, according to the holy Fathers, an inſtruction for all parents to conſult the will, and implore the aid of God, before they preſume to diſpoſe of their children. Nothing leſs than the eternal welfare of their ſouls, and the ſervice of almighty God, ought to guide their intention, and regulate their conduct in this reſpect. Saint Chryſoſtom more at large deplores the misfortune of thoſe parents, who notwithſtanding their Chriſtian profeſſion, ſacrifice their children, not to God, as Abraham did, but to Satan, either by engaging them in the purſuits of a vain world, or by drawing them from the practice of a virtuous life. Abraham is the only one, ſays he, who conſecrates his ſon to God, while thouſands of others turn their children over to the devil: and the joy we feel in ſeeing ſome few take a Chriſtian care of their little ones, is preſently ſuppreſſed with grief at the ſight of thoſe greater numbers, who totally neglect that duty, and by the example they give, deſerve to be conſidered rather as parricides, than the parents of their children.

§ XI. *Sarah's death.* *Gen.* 23.

A. M. 2145, *Before J. C.* 1855. ISAAC being reſtored to his parents by the expreſs order of almighty God, who had given him to them in their old age, continued to be the comfort of his mother, as long as ſhe ſurvived: for ſhe died ſoon after, in the hundred and twenty-ſeventh year of her age, and the thirty-ſeventh of her motherhood. Abraham felt and bemoaned her death: he affectionately paid her the tribute of his tears, and gave her an honourable interment. Being a ſtranger in the country, without ſo much as a foot of land, that he could call his own, he addreſſed himſelf to the people of Geth for leave to purchaſe a little ſpot of ground, wherein he might bury the remains of his deceaſed wife. The citizens of Geth had conceiv-

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ed a very high opinion of Abraham's merit, whom they ſtiled the Prince of God; they begged he would fix upon the ſpot, which ſeemed the moſt ſuitable for his purpoſe, and take it, as a mark of the reſpect they bore him. Abraham thanked them in the moſt civil terms for their offer, but from a principle of generoſity refuſed to accept of it, unleſs they would permit him to pay the full value: the only favour he requeſted was their intereſt with Ephron, a principal man of the city, to ſell him his field, in which there was a double cave, that would ſerve as a burying place both for him and Sarah. Ephron, who was preſent, immediately made him an offer, and even inſiſted upon his acceptance of the field, he wanted. Abraham had taken his reſolution to accept of nothing, but what he paid for: he deſired to know, what the field was worth; it was valued at four hundred ſicles of ſilver. The generous Ephron ſtill refuſed to ſell, and urged the point of making a preſent of his ground to Abraham: Abraham upon that counted out his purchaſe money in preſence of the people, and poſitively inſiſted upon the contract being immediately made, and ſigned by proper witneſſes; which being accordingly done, he took poſſeſſion of the field, and there interred his wife.

It ſeems not a little extraordinary, that Abraham, to whom the poſſeſſion of that whole country had been ſo repeatedly promiſed, never ſhould have thought of making any other purchaſe, than that of a burying-place for himſelf and children. The holy Patriarch had his thoughts almoſt conſtantly fixt on Heaven: the proſpect of an everlaſting inheritance above, gave him a contempt of all periſhable things below, and made him look upon the earth, only as his place of baniſhment and death; and therefore was not deſirous to poſſeſs any more of it, than what was ſufficient to ſerve him for a grave. So perfectly does this conduct of the Patriarch agree with what ſaint Paul has witneſſed of him, and ſo diſintereſted was his attachment to the delightful land of Chanaan! How deſirable ſoever that country might ſeem to worldly men, to Abraham it ſerved for nothing more, than as a mirour, wherein he contemplated that inviſible land,

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in compariſon of which, as the ſame Apoſtle ſpeaketh, all the reſt is but dung and ordure.

§ XII. *Iſaac's marriage. Gen.* 24.

A. M. 2148, *Before J. C.* 1852. ABRAHAM was now grown old, and the happy ſettlement of his ſon Iſaac became the ſerious object of his thoughts. He knew, how much the happineſs of man depends upon the woman, whom he takes for his partner in life. In the conſort, he propoſed for Iſaac, he expected more eſſential qualifications, than could be diſcovered amongſt the daughters of Chanaan; he ſought a woman, whoſe piety might draw down the bleſſings of Heaven upon his ſon, at the ſame time that ſhe ſhould become his wife; and ſuch a woman he thought was not to be met with, but amongſt his own kindred in Meſopotamia. Thither therefore he ſent Eliezer his houſehold ſteward, with inſtructions how to act. Eliezer being come near to the town of Nachor, he humbly prayed for ſucceſs in his commiſſion, and that by ſome viſible ſign he might know the maiden, whom God had choſen for Iſaac's future conſort. The ſign, he prayed for, was, that of all the young women, who were then coming out of the town according to cuſtom, to fetch water from an adjacent fountain, whoſoever upon his ſpeaking to her, ſhould offer to let him and his cattle drink, her he ſhould look upon as the perſon choſen for his maſter. He had ſcarce ended his prayer, and taken his ſtand near the fountain, when behold Rebecca, the fair daughter of Bathuel, came in ſight. Bathuel was the eighth ſon of Nachor, Abraham's ſecond brother. Rebecca filled her pitcher at the fountain, and was going off with it upon her ſhoulder, when Eliezer aſked her to let him drink. She readily conſented, and moreover offered her ſervice to help his camels to drink. The circumſtances exactly anſwered to his wiſh: by this he was thoroughly perſuaded, that Rebecca was the maiden, whom God had choſen for the wife of Iſaac, and immediately preſented her

her with a pair of bracelets and ear-rings, in token of his acknowledgment for the kind ſervices, ſhe had done him. He aſked her, whoſe daughter ſhe was, and whether in her father's houſe there was lodging for a ſtranger? She anſwered, that her father's name was Bathuel, that they had plenty of room for him to lodge in, and good ſtore of hay and ſtraw for his camels. Having ſaid that, ſhe ran back to her mother's houſe, ſhowed her the bracelets and ear-rings, and related her whole adventure. Laban her brother went out in haſte to ſee the generous ſtranger, found him near the fountain, and invited him in. Eliezer readily accepted of the invitation, but refuſed to take any refreſhment, till he had declared his meſſage, and ſettled the buſineſs he was upon. Being bid to ſpeak what it was, he informed them, that he was the ſervant of Abraham, whom God had taken under his ſpecial protection in the land of Chanaan, and bleſſed with great wealth; that having a ſon grown up to man's eſtate, he had commiſſioned him to look out for a ſuitable match for him amongſt his relations; that in obedience to his maſter's orders he was therefore come into Meſopotamia; that he had earneſtly commended the matter to God, and by a ſign, which he mentioned, had undoubtedly learnt, that Rebecca was the woman deſigned by Providence to be Iſaac's conſort, and as ſuch demanded her in marriage for him. Bathuel and Laban were convinced, that the hand of God had conducted the whole affair, and forthwith conſented to the propoſal. Eliezer produced the rich preſents, he had brought, of gold and ſilver plate; a banquet was prepared, and the day was ſpent in good and chearful entertainment. Eliezer, like a truſty ſervant, roſe betimes next morning, impatient to return, and propoſed ſetting off immediately. Laban and his mother inſiſted upon his ſtaying at leaſt ten days longer, which he not being willing to conſent to, Rebecca was called upon to decide the point, and fix the time for their departure. Her anſwer was, that ſhe was ready to go as ſoon as it ſhould be determined: upon which Eliezer ſtood to his firſt reſolution, and immediately ſet off with her towards the land of

Chanaan. As they drew near their journey's end, Rebecca happened to deſcry Iſaac walking in the field, and Eliezer telling her, that it was his Lord, her intended huſband, ſhe alighted from her camel, quickly took her cloke, and covered herſelf with great modeſty. Iſaac advanced to meet her, conducted her into Sarah's tent, took her for his wife, and in her love conſoled himſelf for the grief, which he ſtill felt for his mother's death.

In the conduct of this affair we ſee no art employed and no meaſure purſued, but what tends to conſtitute a virtuous and happy marriage: no mention is made of riches or of worldly intereſt: innocence of life and probity of manners is the ſole object of inquiry. For this end not only the advice of diſcreet and ſaintly perſons is aſked, but God himſelf is conſulted by frequent prayer. How charming is the circumſtance of Rebecca's drawing the cloke over her face at the ſight of Iſaac! In that ſhe is an example of modeſty to all young women, ſays ſaint Ambroſe, and ſhe teaches them, with what diſcretion they are to behave themſelves even towards thoſe, whom they think of making their partners for life. It is not the art of finery, nor the ſhow of dreſs; it is modeſty alone, and ſimplicity of manners, that muſt gain the heart, and inſure a laſting love.

§ XIII. *Jacob and Eſau.* *Gen.* 25.

A. M. 2168, *Before J. C.* 1832. ISAAC and Rebecca paſſed the firſt twenty years of their marriage without any iſſue: he prayed earneſtly to God for a ſon, and as he prayed with a due diſpoſition of heart, his prayers were heard. Rebecca became pregnant of twins, who ſeemed to rival each other, even before they were born: for ſhe felt them ſtruggling, as it were, for ſuperiority within her. Full of apprehenſions ſhe began to repine at her having conceived, and in holy prayer conſulted the Lord to know, what the alarming prodigy foreboded. God ſignified to her, that ſhe had

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two infants in her womb, who ſhould be the chiefs of two different people, and that the elder of the two ſhould become ſubſervient to the younger. Rebecca went her full time, and was brought to bed of two ſons, the firſt-born of whom was red and hairy, and named Eſau. His brother followed cloſe after, holding him by the heel, which gave occaſion to his being called Jacob, that is, the ſupplanter.

Abraham ſhared an equal joy with Iſaac at this happy increaſe of his family, which enlivened his hope with the proſpect of a numerous and laſting progeny. He ſaw his two grandchildren as far as the fifteenth year of their age, when having nothing more to deſire in life, he died in a good old age, and was gathered to his forefathers. To his lateſt breath he happily preſerved the ſame fidelity to his Creator, for which he had been ſo remarkable thro' life. Steady in his faith and fixt in the principle of paying an unlimited obedience to the commands of God, he was not to be diverted from his duty by any human conſiderations. He always conſidered himſelf as a ſtranger in the land of Chanaan; and yet, ſince Providence had once called him thither, he never thought of reviſiting his native country of Chaldea. His own good ſenſe twice extricated him from the difficulties, into which the beauty of his wife had thrown him, and his perſonal courage reſcued him from the dangers, to which he expoſed his life for the ſake of preſerving Lot. Having ſpent a hundred and ſeventy-five years in one continued exerciſe of virtue, he died full of days, and is called the Father, as he had been the model of all true believers.

Jacob and Eſau being grown up, the one was plain and ſimple in his manner, the other a huſbandman, and lover of the chace. [redacted] one day returned from the field hungry and much fatigued; and obſerving a meſs of lentil potage, which his brother had been boiling for his own repaſt, earneſtly begged to have it. Jacob would not part with it but upon condition of Eſau's ſelling him his birthright. Eſau was preſſed with hunger; his preſent want hindered him from conſidering

the future advantages, that might accrue to him from the title of primogeniture; he fooliſhly gave up his privilege to Jacob, eat the meſs, and careleſs went his ways.

The holy Fathers obſerve, that in theſe two brothers are characteriſed two different ſorts of men, whoſe principles and manners are as oppoſite to one another, as good is to evil. Theſe are the virtuous man, and the ſenſual man; the firſt takes reaſon for his guide, the latter is ſwayed by pleaſure. Wealth, birth, and worldly honours may ſeem to place the one in a higher rank, and make him, as it were, the elder of the two: but neither birth, nor wealth, nor worldly honours can intitle a man without virtue to a place in Heaven, or make him great in the ſight of God. The virtuous man, however mean he may appear in the eyes of an ambitious world, is preferred by God in the book of life, and whom God prefers, muſt be truly great. Eſau in ſelling his birthright for a meſs of potage, furniſhes an ample ſubject of reflection to thoſe, who inconſiderately graſp at the periſhable goods of the earth, and for the ſake of enjoying what they deem their preſent happineſs, give up their pretenſions to the future joys of Heaven. Blinded by a ſimilar ſtroke of folly, they ſeem to care as little, as Eſau did, about the title they forfeit; and being only intent, like him, upon gratifying their paſſions for the preſent moment, they remain equally inſenſible of the loſs, which they entail upon themſelves by the bargain they make.

§ XIV. *Iſaac bleſſes Jacob.* *Gen.* 27.

A. M. 2245, *Before J. C.* 1755. JACOB, thro' the folly of Eſau having acquired the right of primogeniture, was ſoon after thro' the ſubtle contrivance of his mother fortunate enough to have that right confirmed to him by the bleſſing of his father. Iſaac was far advanced in years, and had loſt his eyeſight: therefore thinking the time of his diſſolution to be

be much nearer, than it really was, he reſolved not to defer giving his laſt bleſſing to his children. With that deſign he ſent for Eſau his favorite ſon, and told him to take his bow and quiver, and to kill him ſome game to his liking, that at his return he might receive his father's bleſſing. Rebecca was in the way to hear what Iſaac ſaid, and reſolved to procure that bleſſing for her favorite Jacob. She therefore told him to go, as ſoon as Eſau was ſet out, and fetch her two of the fatteſt kids of the whole flock. He did ſo: ſhe loſt no time, ſhe prepared and ſerved them up in the manner, ſhe knew her huſband liked. She had already dreſſed Jacob in Eſau's beſt clothes, which ſhe had in her cuſtody, and covered his hands and neck with the kid's ſkin, that if from the difference of voice in the two brothers Iſaac ſhould ſuſpect any fraud, he might by feeling be induced to take him for Eſau. Jacob therefore in that diſguiſe carried the meat unto his blind father, and aſked his bleſſing. Iſaac no ſooner heard him ſpeak, but knew it to be Jacob's voice, and aſked him, who he was? Jacob anſwered, that he was his eldeſt ſon Eſau. Iſaac was not convinced; the voice inſtead of removing did but increaſe his doubts: he bade his ſon approach, took him by the hand, and felt to find, whom he could not ſee. The voice indeed, ſays he, is the voice of Jacob; but the hands are the hands of Eſau. Being thus ſatisfied, he received the meat and the wine from Jacob, and having finiſhed his meal, deſired his ſon to kiſs him. A ſweet fragrance diffuſed itſelf from the young man's clothes, which as ſoon as Iſaac perceived, he compared him to a field, full of the ſweeteſt odours, and with his bleſſing wiſhed him an abundance of all good things; that he might be repleniſhed with the dew of Heaven and with the fat of the land. He declared him to be the Lord of all his brethren, and concluded with theſe words, Whoever ſhall curſe you, let him alſo be accurſed, and whoever ſhall bleſs you, let him be repleniſhed with benedictions. Scarce had Iſaac finiſhed the ſentence, when Jacob went out of the room, and in came Eſau with the game he had killed, big with expectation

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of his father's bleſſing. Iſaac in ſurpriſe aſked him, who he was? and being anſwered it was Eſau, it is incredible with what amazement he was ſtruck, and how awfully he admired the myſterious ways of Providence. Thy brother, ſaid he, has craftily obtained the bleſſing, which I had for thee; I have bleſſed him, and he ſhall be bleſſed. Whereupon Eſau roared out with vexation, and in the bittereſt terms arraigned his brother Jacob's perfidy. Bathed in tears, he ſorrowfully aſked his father, if he had not one bleſſing at leaſt in reſerve for an hapleſs ſon, who had been twice ſupplanted by a brother's treachery?

Eſau in this point of view exhibits to us a ſtriking figure of thoſe Chriſtians, as the holy Fathers remark, who being deſirous of uniting the ſervice of God and the ſervice of the world together, would be glad to enjoy the ſweets of the earth without giving up thoſe of Heaven. The good old Patriarch, being ſoftened into pity at the tears of his wretched ſon, bleſſed him indeed at laſt, but with this expreſs reſerve of his being ever ſubject to his brother: and this it was, which provoked Eſau's reſentment to ſuch a height, that he waited but his father's death to take away his brother's life.

This hiſtory, ſo curious and at once ſo myſterious thro' all its parts, marks out to us Jeſus Chriſt clothed with the appearance of a ſinner, as Jacob was with the likeneſs of his hairy brother: and it is, according to the holy Fathers, a wonderful figure not only of the reprobation of the Jews, whoſe deſires were ſolely fixed upon the things below, but alſo of the pre-ordination of the Faithful, who with holy David demand of God but one ſovereign good, and confine their deſires to one only bleſſing, which is that of inhabiting the houſe of our Lord for ever. We muſt be careful, ſays ſaint Paul, not to incur the misfortune of Eſau, who in the requeſt he made for his father's bleſſing, having no other title to produce, than what he had made over to his brother, deſerved not to be heard; nor could he by entreaty or by his tears prevail upon the virtuous Patriarch to retract, what he had once pronounced. For as he had

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deſpiſed God, God in his turn deſpiſed him, and diſregarded his cries, as the marks of a fictitious ſorrow, that ſprung only from vexation and not from any goodneſs of the heart.

§ XV. *Jacob's ladder. Gen. 28.*

THE violence of Eſau's anger made it no longer ſafe for Jacob to remain with him under the ſame roof. *A. M.* 2245. *Before J.C.* 1755.

Rebecca foreſaw the ſtorm, and trembled at the thought of what might be the conſequence: her apprehenſions for the ſafety of a darling ſon awakened all the tenderneſs of a mother's affection, and put her upon the ſtudy of ſome contrivance to preſerve him. She wiſely judged, that Eſau's reſentment might cool by length of time, if the object of it were but removed out of ſight. She propoſed her thoughts upon the matter to her huſband, and ſhe did it in ſuch a manner, that it was impoſſible for him not to approve. She ſaid, it was time for Jacob to ſettle himſelf in life; that ſhe could not bear the thought of his marrying a woman of Chanaan, as Eſau had done; ſhe therefore entreated him to let Jacob go to her father Bathuel in Meſopotamia, where he was likely to find a proper match for himſelf amongſt the daughters of her brother Laban. Iſaac gave his conſent, and in taking leave of his ſon repeated to him the bleſſings, he had already given him. Jacob therefore quitted his native home more like a diſtreſt man, that was flying from the perſecution of an enraged brother, than in the ſtile of a rich heir, who was going to make choice of a companion for life. In his dreſs and equipage he wore the badge of a Chriſtian and truly religious humility. Being come to a certain place in the open country after ſun-ſet, he threw himſelf upon the ground, laid a ſtone under his head, and compoſed himſelf to ſleep. During his repoſe he was favoured with a viſion, which convinced him, that the poor and perſecuted are under the immediate protection of Heaven.

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In his ſleep he ſaw a ladder, the foot of which ſtood upon the ground, and the top ſeemed to reach to Heaven; numbers of Angels were aſcending and deſcending by it; God himſelf was leaning thereon, and ſaid to him, I am the God of Abraham thy father and the God of Iſaac, to thee I will give the land, in which thou ſleepeſt; thy children ſhall be as numerous, as the grains of duſt upon the earth, and *in thy ſeed all nations ſhall be bleſſed.* He promiſed to be with him where ever he ſhould go, and to bring him back to the country, which he was quitting. Jacob awoke out of ſleep, and being hurried with the idea of what had been repreſented to him, trembling cried out, How awful is this place! The Lord is moſt certainly here: it is no other than the dwelling place of God, and the gate of Heaven!

This myſterious viſion, of which the holy Fathers have ſaid ſo much, leaves no room to doubt of the ſpecial care, that God always takes of his faithful ſervants. In all occurrences of life he is ever preſent with them; in their moſt preſſing wants his holy Angels are waiting by their ſide, as witneſſes of their conduct, ready to preſent their petitions to Almighty God for their ſupport and comfort. Animated by ſuch a faith, and encouraged by ſuch a hope, the faithful Chriſtian is neither terrified by perſecution, nor diſheartened by affliction. The words, that Jacob ſpoke upon his waking, are in a ſpecial manner applied to the ſanctity of our Churches, in which we adore the ſame ſupreme Being, whoſe viſible preſence filled the Patriarch with ſo much awe: and the holy Fathers wiſh, that every Chriſtian, as often as he enters the houſe of God, would carry with him the like religious reſpect towards the ſame divine Majeſty, of whoſe inviſible preſence he is fully convinced by the faith he profeſſes.

§ XVI. *Rachel and Lia. Gen.* 29.

A. M. 2252. *Before J. C.* 1748. JACOB being in this manner aſſured of the divine protection, that was watching over him, roſe up with freſh confidence,

confidence, and continued on his journey, till he came to Haran. There meeting with ſome ſhepherds of the country, he aſked them, if they were acquainted with Laban, the grandſon of Nachor. The ſhepherds anſwered, that they were, and pointed out Rachael his fair daughter, who happened to be then coming to water her father's flocks at a well juſt by. Jacob advanced to ſalute her, told her, with tears in his eyes, who he was, and quickly removed the ſtone from the mouth of the well, that her flocks might drink. Rachel ran to tell her father, that Jacob his ſiſter's ſon was come. Laban haſtened out to meet his nephew, whom he heartily embraced and brought into his houſe. Jacob, with a ſimplicity peculiar to the Patriarchs in thoſe days, related to his uncle the motive of his coming, the cauſe of his brother's anger, and the neceſſity he was under of abſenting himſelf from home for a time. Laban told him, he was welcome to ſtay in his houſe, as long as he pleaſed, and aſked him, what reward he ſhould give him for his ſervice, while he ſtaid. You have a daughter called Rachel, replied Jacob, and if you will but ſuffer me to become your ſon-in-law, I want no other recompenſe: I will ſerve you for ſeven years. His propoſal was accepted of; and happy did he think himſelf in being to receive ſo amiable a conſort for ſo trifling a ſervice. But at the end of the ſeven years he found himſelf moſt grieveouſly diſappointed: for Laban being unwilling to ſee his ſecond daughter married before the firſt, deceived him the very night of his marriage, and in the place of Rachel ſubſtituted Lia her eldeſt ſiſter. Jacob did not diſcover his miſtake before morning, when he began to complain moſt heavily of the injuſtice, that was done him. To ſilence his complaints Laban promiſed to give him Rachel, and that as ſoon as the ſeven days appointed for the ſolemnity of his marriage with Lia were expired, he ſhould eſpouſe her fair ſiſter, if he pleaſed, upon condition, that he would agree to ſerve him ſeven years longer. Jacob acquieſced rather, than not gain the charming object of his affections. During thoſe ſeven years he had ſix ſons by Lia, and not

one by Rachel, for ſhe was barren. Rachel grieved to ſee herſelf thus ſubject to a reproach, which all the fondneſs of her huſband could not compenſate. The numerous offspring of her happy ſiſter moreover fixed the ſting of envy in her breaſt, and increaſed the pain of her affliction. Her only reſource of comfort was from God. She ſent up her fervent prayers to Heaven, nor did ſhe ceaſe from praying, till ſhe obtained what ſhe aſked. Almighty God bleſſed her with a ſon, to whom ſhe gave the name of Joſeph. Soon after the birth of Joſeph, Jacob deſired Laban to let him return into his own country. He repreſented to him, that the fourteen years, he had bargained for, were elapſed; that he had demeaned himſelf with the ſtricteſt honeſty in his ſervice, and that it was time for him to think of ſettling and providing for his own family. Laban was ſenſible of the treaſure, he poſſeſſed in Jacob, and would not willingly agree to let him go. He knew, what bleſſings he had received from God, ſince Jacob had had the management of his flocks: he intreated him to continue in his ſervice, and bade him name the recompenſe, he expected in return. They came to an agreement, and Jacob upon the condition of having a certain ſhare in the flocks, conſented to remain ſix years longer.

The holy Fathers, in taking a view of Jacob's life, admire the wonderful conduct of divine providence in his regard. Almighty God had promiſed him the ſovereignty of the whole country of Chanaan, and yet left him no leſs than twenty years in foreign ſervitude. His children were to be the chiefs of a great people, and he, their father, was compelled to paſs his life in labour and painful ſervice. By this example, ſay the Saints, God has been pleaſed to teach us, that every head of a family, and every paſtor of the Church, ought in duty to labour for the ſalvation of thoſe, whom they have under their charge, with as much ſolicitude as for their own; to advance the good and happineſs of their flock or family, ought to be their joy and chiefeſt glory: with a fatherly care they ought to watch over and provide for them in their wants, that they may with truth be able to ſay,

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what Jacob ſaid to Laban, Behold I have not loſt one of thy flock, neither has the thief nor the wolf diminiſhed thy fold: whatever accident has happened, I have laboured to make it good; thy numbers are increaſed and multiplied: for this I have ſpared no pains, and refuſed no labour: day and night have I borne the heat and cold, and of their ſleep have mine eyes been robbed; yet for this, and for all the ſervice, that I have endeavoured to render to men, ingratitude and evil treatment has hitherto been my only recompenſe.

§ XVII. *Jacob's return.* Gen. 31.

LABAN was grown extremely jealous of Jacob on account of his great increaſe of wealth, which he looked upon as ſo much taken from himſelf. The prudent Patriarch began to be apprehenſive of the conſequences, that this jealouſy might produce, and thought that to ſave his life it was as neceſſary to fly from Laban, as it had once been to fly from Eſau. He was ſoon after confirmed in that opinion by a ſpecial revelation from Almighty God, who commanded him to return to his native home, and promiſed to be his protector againſt the reſentments of Eſau. He communicated his thoughts to Rachel and Lia; they approved of his deſign, and agreed to accompany him in the journey. Jacob had nothing more to do, than to prepare for his departure, which he did with the utmoſt ſecreſy. Laban was gone into the country to ſheer his ſheep: Jacob took that opportunity of collecting his ſubſtance together, and privately ſet off without taking leave of any one. Rachel had ſecreted the idols of her father's gods, and carried them away with her. It was three days, before Laban was informed of this unexpected flight of his ſon-in-law. He then haſtily aſſembled his dependants, and led them out as in the purſuit of an enemy, whom he intended to reduce by open force. He followed the route, that the holy Patriarch had taken, and on the ſeventh day

A. M. 2265, *Before J. C.* 1785.

came up with him in the mountain of Galaad. The preceding night Almighty God had admoniſhed him in a viſion to beware of violence and all harſh expreſſions againſt his ſervant Jacob. They both pitched their tents upon the mountain, where they came to a parley. Why, ſaid Laban, why do you thus run off with my two daughters, as if they were your ſlaves taken from an enemy? why did you conceal your departure? why was I not made acquainted with your deſign? I then might have accompanied you with honour part of the way home, and have taken leave of my children. To long after your native country, and to wiſh to be amongſt your friends, was but natural for you, and what I cannot diſapprove of; but to ſteal away my gods—— Here Jacob interrupted him, and after making a ſhort apology for the ſecrecy of his proceedings, boldly denied the theft, promiſing to agree, that if any one of his whole retinue had been guilty of ſuch an action, he ſhould ſatisfy for it by his death: ſo little did he think, that his favorite Rachel was the perſon. Laban took him at his word, and entering into Jacob's own tent in the firſt place, he there made a diligent ſearch after his gods. But not finding them, he proceeded in the ſame manner to the tents of Lia and the two maid-ſervants, and in the laſt place came to Rachel. Rachel had ſecreted the little gods under the camel's litter, and had ſat down upon them. As ſoon as her father entered the tent, ſhe began making her excuſes for not riſing to ſalute him, under the pretence of her not being well, nor in a condition to ſtand. Laban therefore being unable to prove the charge, he had brought againſt Jacob, Jacob in his turn began with ſome warmth to complain of the many and heavy grievances, which he had been forced to undergo for twenty years in his ſervice. When they had thus opened their mutual complaints, and expoſtulated with one another, they ſuddenly forgot the ſubject of their diſagreement, entered into a ſolemn league, and parted good friends.

Saint Ambroſe conſiders Jacob in the houſe of Laban as a perfect model of that prudence and honeſty, which ought

ought to direct our tranſactions with the world. In taking care to poſſeſs nothing, but what he could eaſily carry with him, he remained independent of every other man; he poſſeſſed nothing, which he had not honeſtly acquired, and which he could not ſtrictly call his own. The manner, by which he had acquired his wealth, was not only equitable in itſelf, but even advantageous to the perſon, whom he ſerved. Laban had done all he could to keep him in a ſtate of indigence and ſervitude, yet could not prevent his growing rich: he had always treated him with inſincerity and injuſtice, but was forced in the end to own the ſuperior virtues of a man, who was in all things guided and ſupported by the ſpirit of God. Happy is the Chriſtian, who in the words of Jacob, can ſay to the Devil and the world, ſays the ſame Father, Behold, there is nothing about me, that belongs to you; ſearch me round, and take it, if you find it. Happy Rachel, who by flying from her father's houſe trampled his idols under foot. It is the example, which all Chriſtians have to follow in ſeparating themſelves from thoſe, who under the miſtaken name of love or friendſhip, would perſuade them to ſacrifice their ſouls to the idols of vanity and the world, by a violation of thoſe ſacred engagements, which they made to God at baptiſm.

§ XVIII. *Eſau reconciled with Jacob.* *Gen.* 33.

JACOB having got free of Laban, began to conſider what method he ſhould take with his brother Eſau: for he could not ſuppoſe, that Eſau had entirely forgot, what had formerly paſſed between them. Therefore to try how he might be diſpoſed, he ſent ſome of his attendants before to let him know, that his brother Jacob was coming home upon the preſumption, that he would be glad to ſee him after ſo long an abſence. Eſau at receiving this information, put himſelf at the head of four hundred men, and ſet forward to meet him. Jacob was alarmed

A. M. 2265, *Before J. C.* 1735.

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at the report, and not doubting, but his brother intended to offer violence, ſought for ſhelter under the divine protection, and by fervent prayer implored the power of the Moſt High againſt all events whatever. This done, he reſolved to try ſuch human means, as in his prudence he judged the moſt likely to ſooth his brother's anger. He prepared him rich preſents; he choſe out of his herds and flocks a certain number of each ſort, which he divided into two troops, and ſent before him at ſome diſtance one from the other, ordering the leaders of each troop to preſent them ſucceſſively to Eſau, as they met him, with the greateſt tokens of ſubmiſſion and friendſhip. The night before theſe orders were to have been executed, Jacob had a viſion, in which he ſeemed to be wreſtling with a man till morning. It was an Angel in human ſhape, who not being able to throw him, touched the ſinew of his thigh, which immediately became dry and contracted. The hardy Patriarch ſtill would not yield, and refuſed to let his antagoniſt go, unleſs he would firſt give him his bleſſing. The Angel aſked him his name; he anſwered Jacob: Thou ſhalt no longer be called Jacob, but Iſrael, replied the Angel; for ſince thou haſt exerted thyſelf with ſuch vigour againſt the Angel of God, how much more eaſily wilt thou prevail over the efforts of men? It was now morning; Jacob caſt his eyes round the country, and at a diſtance deſcried his brother coming on at the head of a formidable troop. Not knowing what might happen, he ranged his wives and children in a line behind him, and advanced towards his brother. He bowed reſpectfully to him, as he approached, and at ſeven different times made his obeiſance to the very ground. Eſau was diſarmed and mollified: unable to ſtand out againſt ſuch marks of goodneſs and ſubmiſſion, he ran up and embraced him; with becoming kindneſs he ſaluted his brother's wives and children, and could ſcarce be prevailed upon to accept his preſents. He expreſſed the greateſt ſatisfaction in his friendſhip, and begged they might finiſh the remaining part of the journey in each other's company. You ſee, ſaid Jacob, that my flocks are weak, and my children

children young; they travel on in very ſlow marches, which will be tedious to you. Let me be no burden: if I am happy enough to have your good graces, I want no more: return to Seir, where I will join you, as ſoon as circumſtances will permit.

In this manner did Jacob diſarm the violence of a brother, who had conſpired his ruin. He conſidered not, which of the two was moſt to blame; he mentioned not any thing that could renew their former ſubject of diſagreement; his language was diſcreet and humble; he forgot the paſt; he baniſhed from his heart every motion of paſſion and reſentment; or if he retained a feeling of the injuries he had received, it did not ariſe from any ill-will, but from a charitable and tender concern for the miſchiefs, that his brother had thereby drawn upon himſelf, as ſaint Ambroſe remarks. Great and trying were Jacob's misfortunes, and he bore them with fortitude: his confidence in God raiſed him above the reach of human fears: amidſt the terrors of an armed hoſt, in the preſence of an enraged enemy, he acted with all the coolneſs and deliberation of a mind at eaſe; amidſt the threats of an approaching death, he remained unſhaken and unruffled: by a timely condeſcenſion he triumphed over his brother's obſtinacy; by knowing when to yield, he broke his ſavage hatred. In this example we ſee, that every thing at laſt muſt yield to true piety, tho' for a time oppreſſed by open force; and that God, who with an admirable wiſdom regulates the manner and the meaſure of ſufferings, with which he tries his faithful friends, turns all to their advantage, and in their favour changes the hearts of men, when and as he pleaſes.

§ XIX. *Dina. Gen.* 34.

JACOB after his return from Meſopotamia ſettled with his family near Salem, a town of the Sichimites, where he purchaſed a piece of land, and lived extremely happy, till an unlucky accident interrupted the peace of his family. *A. M.* 2274. *Before J. C.* 1726.

family. He had a daughter called Dina, a fair virgin in the bloom of youth. Being led by a curioſity, which is as natural, as it is often dangerous to that age, ſhe went out to ſee the women of that country. Sichem, who was king of the place, ſaw her, and being taken with her beauty, ſeized and carried her off to his houſe. He tried every perſuaſive art to make her conſent to his wicked deſires; but not being able to prevail, he proceeded to the moſt criminal violence, and then told his father Hemor, that he would marry her with her father's conſent. They both went to treat with Jacob upon the ſubject. The good Patriarch, who was in great concern for what had befallen his daughter, ſaid he could give them no anſwer, without the approbation of his ſons. The ſons came in ſoon after, and were informed of the whole affair, with all its circumſtances. They were greatly exaſperated at the injury done to their ſiſter by her lover, and reſolved to revenge it, as ſoon as an opportunity ſhould offer. They however diſſembled their reſentment for the preſent, and only ſaid, that no marriage could be lawfully contracted between their ſiſter and the prince of Sichem, unleſs he and his people would firſt ſubmit to the law of circumciſion. Hemor and Sichem propoſed it to their people, who readily came into it, and the ceremony was accordingly performed upon all the men of Sichem. The third day after, when the wound is commonly the moſt painful, Simeon and Levi, full brothers to Dina, without ſaying a word to their father, entered ſword in hand into the town, and killed every man, they met without exception. This firſt ſcene of blood was ſcarce ended, when the other ſons of Jacob ruſhed in, pillaged the town, and carried off the ſpoils. Jacob was grievouſly provoked at his ſons, eſpecially for their having abuſed a religious ceremony to obtain their revenge, and loudly complained of Simeon and Levi in particular, who by an action equally cruel and perfidious had rendered their name odious to the neighbouring cities, and expoſed their little family to the danger of being cut off by the like violence. Being under this apprehenſion he was inſpired to go to Bethel,

where God had formerly appeared to him, when he fled from Eſau. He marched away with his whole family unhurt and unmoleſted. For the terror of his name, as the Scripture remarks, had made ſuch an impreſſion upon the people, that no one durſt preſume to give him the leaſt diſturbance. Soon after his arrival at Bethel he loſt his dear Rachel, who died in child-bed.

About the ſame time died alſo his father *A. M.* 2288.
Iſaac, aged a hundred and eighty years.

Full of days, ſays the ſacred text, the venerable Patriarch ſlept with his forefathers, and was buried by his two ſons Jacob and Eſau. Eſau ſoon after ſeparated from his brother, for they were too rich to live together.

The hiſtory of Dina is mentioned by the holy Fathers as an inſtance of the danger, that attends an idle curioſity. It merits the particular attention of thoſe, ſays ſaint Ambroſe, whoſe age and ſex is moſt expoſed to danger. The looſe modes and maxims of the preſent age ought to make a Chriſtian virgin extremely cautious, how ſhe truſts herſelf unaccompanied abroad, what company ſhe ſees, and what places ſhe frequents. Curioſity may be as ſtrong in her, as it was in Dina, and if indulged with the ſame liberty, may poſſibly be followed by the ſame fatal conſequences. Curioſity led her to the ſpot, where ſhe loſt her virginity: her curioſity was the firſt ſtep towards all thoſe horrors, which her brothers committed in butchering the inhabitants and in plundering the effects of Sichem: her curioſity in fine was the firſt cauſe, that obliged Jacob to retire from the ſpot, where he could no longer ſtay with ſafety to himſelf or family, and where they muſt all have periſhed, had not God miraculouſly interpoſed in their favour.

§ XX. *Joſeph ſold by his brethren. Gen. 37.*

JACOB, who had happily eſcaped the attacks of foreign enemies, began to be perplexed with domeſtic broils, which were the more painful to him, as they *A. M.* 2276. *Before J. C.* 1742.

were fomented by his own children. Joſeph his ſon by Rachel, and the laſt of thoſe, that were born in Meſopotamia, had accuſed ſome of his brothers of a moſt ſhameful crime, which the ſacred text does not name. This accuſation procured him much ill will amongſt them all: he was his father's favorite, and that alone had been enough to make them hate him. He was an innocent, artleſs, open-hearted youth, in the ſixteenth year of his age, and thinking his brothers to be as well-meaning, as himſelf, freely ſpoke his thoughts to them. Amongſt other things he related two of his dreams, which added freſh fewel to their glowing envy. I dreamt, ſaid he, that I was binding up corn in a field with you, and that my ſheaf ſeemed to riſe, as it were, and to ſtand upright, while yours ſtood round, and paid homage to it. And in another dream, I ſaw the ſun and moon and eleven ſtars paying the like homage to me. The relation of theſe two dreams kindled up a flame in his brothers breaſts, which ſeemed to threaten him with preſent ruin, but which the Almighty rendered inſtrumental to that future greatneſs, which his dreams preſaged. Not long after this his father ſent him to viſit his brothers, who were tending their flocks in the plains of Sichem. As ſoon as they ſaw the dreamer coming, as they called him, they formed a deſign againſt his life. Ruben, the eldeſt of all Jacob's children, would not agree to the barbarous propoſal. Inſtead of imbruing their hands in the blood of the innocent, he adviſed them to let him down into a dry well, that was hard by. His intention was to ſave his brother's life, if he could, for the preſent, and in a ſeaſonable hour reſtore him to his father. His advice took place, and Joſeph was let down into the well. Some Iſmaelite merchants happening to paſs by ſoon after in their way to Egypt, the unnatural brothers thought it a fair opportunity to get rid of Joſeph without taking away his life: they drew him out of the well, and ſold him to the merchants for twenty pieces of ſilver, intending at the ſame time to make their father believe, that his darling ſon had been devoured by a wild beaſt. To make that ſtory the more credible, they took Joſeph's

variegated

variegated coat, and having ſtained it with the blood of a kid, ſent it home, as if they had found it in that condition. Jacob knew it at firſt ſight, and from thence concluding his ſon to be really dead, rent his garments thro' grief, and would admit of no conſolation. Joſeph in the mean time was carried away into Egypt, where the merchants ſold him to Putiphar, the prime officer of king Pharaoh's guards.

Thus was the helpleſs youth plunged into a ſtate of the deepeſt diſtreſs, which he had neither merited nor foreſeen. God had given him an obſcure glympſe of the glory, that was waiting for him at a diſtance, but concealed from him the misfortunes, that were then hanging over his head. Joſeph ſold by his own brothers is a lively figure of Jeſus Chriſt in that particular circumſtance of his life, in which by the treachery of a falſe apoſtle he was likewiſe ſold to his enemies. The grief, that Jacob ſo juſtly expreſſed on this occaſion is, according to ſaint Ambroſe, a ſingular inſtruction to all parents. He wept for the loſs of a ſon, whom he tenderly loved, and whom if he had not loved ſo much, would perhaps have had no cauſe to weep. For the father's exceſſive love was the primary cauſe of the ſon's misfortune, in as much as it firſt excited his brothers envy, and whetted their ſpleen againſt him. It is a father's duty to love his children, ſays the holy Doctor, and it is but juſt to love them the moſt, who are the moſt deſerving; but to ſhow that love in the preſence of the reſt is always dangerous: for ſuch a ſhow of preference to the one muſt naturally make the others jealous, who look upon themſelves as injured by it. Hence the father's partiality often becomes a real injury to his own favorite child, as far as it deprives him of the affection of his brothers. A perfect union of heart and will is one of the moſt precious advantages, that a father can procure in his family. No wonder if an eſtate, or ſome leſs valuable preſent made to a favorite child, ſhould excite the envy of the reſt, continues the ſame ſaint, ſince a coat ſomewhat finer than ordinary, given by Jacob to Joſeph, ſtirred up ſuch a ferment amongſt the brothers,

that even the moſt moderate were eager to ſell him for a ſlave, while others inſiſted upon his blood.

§ XXI. *Joſeph's chaſtity. Gen.* 39.

A. M. 2286, *Before J. C.* 1714. OPPRESSED innocence never is abandoned by Almighty God. Joſeph in an adolatrous country in the midſt of ſtrangers, met with kinder treatment and with better friends, than he had found at home amongſt his brothers. His prudence, his fidelity, and modeſt conduct, gained him the affection of Putiphar his maſter. His genius and liberality of ſentiment was not that of a common ſlave. His perſon was comely, and an engaging ſweetneſs of countenance and behaviour made him every body's favorite. Being appointed by Putiphar to ſuperintend his houſehold, he acquitted himſelf faithfully of the truſt, that was repoſed in him: he was happy, and enjoying the ſunſhine of his good fortune, when a ſudden ſtorm aroſe from a quarter, he had the leaſt ſuſpected. Amongſt his many admirers was his miſtreſs, Putiphar's wife. She beheld him with a fond eye, ſhe grew amorous, and conceived a criminal affection for him: ſhe diſcloſed to him her paſſion, ſhe ſolicited his conſent without being able to obtain it. Far from being checked by the firſt refuſal, ſhe returned again to the charge; ſhe preſſed and ſolicited with more eager warmth. How is it poſſible, replied the virtuous youth, that I ſhould think of being ſo unfaithful to a maſter, who has been ſo good, and placed ſuch confidence in me? How is it poſſible I ſhould conſent to commit ſuch a ſin in the preſence of my God? This ſteady reſiſtance increaſed her deſires. Finding him one day alone in his apartment, ſhe attacked him with freſh eagerneſs, ſhe laid hold of him, and began to offer violence. In this ſituation having no witneſs near, Joſeph had but to fly. He ruſhed out of doors, but left unluckily his cloke in the woman's hands. Her ſlighted love then turned to fury: ſhe became outrageous, ſhe determined to ruin the man, whom ſhe

ſhe could not gain. She ſcreamed aloud, as if Joſeph had made ſome violent aſſault upon her honour; ſhe ran out with his cloke in her hand; ſhe held it up and ſhowed it to all, as a proof of her aſſertion. She carried it to her huſband as a trophy of her fidelity to him, and impudently produced it againſt the man, whoſe innocence was his guilt, and whoſe conduct had been the very reverſe of her own. Putiphar gave her credit for what ſhe ſaid, and upon her ſingle evidence judged the innocent to be guilty. Without any further examination he ordered Joſeph to be immediately ſecured and caſt into one of the ſtate priſons. By a ſentence the moſt unjuſt and cruel, Joſeph was condemned to ſuffer for a ſuppoſed crime, of which his accuſer was really guilty. For the ſlander was believed, and ſilence impoſed upon the truth.

So it is, ſays ſaint Ambroſe, ſpeaking of the orthodox Chriſtians, who were at that time grievouſly perſecuted by the Arians, that the priſons are now become the dwelling of the innocent: the adulterers of our faith prevail; they accuſe and caſt into chains all thoſe, who refuſe to concur with them in their impious tenets. But let not the courage of thoſe champions of Chriſtianity be dejected, continues the holy Doctor, God will deſcend with with them into the dungeon, as is recorded of the Patriarch Joſeph, nor will he abandon them in their chains. Sufferings and perſecutions are the portion of God's elect: thro' various tribulations and painful trials lies the way to Heaven: that is the way in which our bleſſed Redeemer trod; that way the Apoſtles, and all the holy Martyrs followed. Animated by their example, and encouraged by the hope of that happy kingdom, which they have in view, the confeſſors of Jeſus Chriſt receive their ſufferings with joy, and think themſelves honoured by the contumelies they undergo in ſo glorious a cauſe. Tho' innocent of the crimes, of which they ſtand accuſed before men, they know, that in the ſight of God they are ſtill deſerving of puniſhment, and therefore bleſs the hand, that ſtrikes to heal them. Void of reſentment againſt their perſecutors they think, they are under a

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ſtrict obligation of loving them the more, becauſe they ſo happily contribute to make them companions of the Croſs, and partakers of the glory of Jeſus Chriſt. They count the days of their affliction, amongſt the moſt happy of their lives: under their ſevereſt trials, in the midſt of their ſharpeſt ſufferings, they ſay with holy Job, There is One in Heaven, who ſees and will judge according to the uprightneſs of our hearts: in Him we hope for the juſtification of our innocence, on Him alone we rely for the reward of our labours.

§ XXII. *Joſeph's greatneſs. Gen.* 40.

A. M. 2287, *Before J. C.* 1713. JOSEPH in his priſon made himſelf beloved and eſteemed by all, that came near him. Honour attended him even in the place of his diſgrace. The keeper of the priſon had ſuch an opinion of him, that he put all the other priſoners under his care, and directed himſelf by his advice. Two of the king's officers, his cup-bearer and chief baker, had fallen into diſgrace, and were lodged in the ſame priſon with Joſeph. On the ſame night they had each a dream, which ſeemed to indicate their future fortune. The cup-bearer dreamt he ſaw a vine, in which there were three ſhoots, producing firſt the bud, then the bloſſom, and at laſt ripe grapes: he gathered the grapes, ſqueezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and preſented it, as uſual, to the king. The baker dreamt he had three baſkets of meal upon his head, and in the uppermoſt different ſorts of paſtry-work, which the birds came to pick at. Being much troubled in mind, and anxious to know, what theſe dreams could ſignify, they both applied to Joſeph for an explanation. Joſeph, as a figure of Jeſus Chriſt in the judgment he paſſed between the two companions of his ſufferings upon the croſs, gave two very oppoſite interpretations to the two dreams, declaring to the baker, that within three days he ſhould be hanged upon a gibbet; and to the cup-bearer, that he ſhould be reſtored to his former honour.

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When you ſhall ſtand before the king, ſaid he to the cup-bearer, ſpeak a good word for me; for I have been traitorouſly ſold in my own country, and am here unjuſtly thrown into priſon. The event anſwered the prediction; Joſeph nevertheleſs remained two years longer in confinement; for the cup-bearer in the hurry of his proſperity had entirely forgot him, till he was put in mind by the relation of two dreams, that Pharaoh had. Pharaoh in his ſleep ſeemed to be ſtanding upon the banks of the Nile, from whence came out ſeven fat kine, that went and grazed in the fertile marſhes. Soon after there came forth ſeven other kine moſt hideouſly lean, which began to feed upon the rich banks of the river, and devoured the ſeven, that were fat and beautiful. Pharaoh awaked, and compoſing himſelf to ſleep again, ſaw in a ſecond dream ſeven full ears of corn upon one ſtalk, that were ſucceeded and ſpoiled of their beauty by ſeven blighted ones. Theſe two dreams in one night ſeemed to portend ſomething uncommon; and every man, that pretended to any ſkill in Egypt, was ſent for to interpret their meaning: and no one being able to ſay any thing, that was ſatisfactory upon the ſubject, the cup-bearer mentioned what had happened to him, when in priſon with a Hebrew ſervant called Joſeph. Joſeph therefore by the king's command was brought out of priſon and preſented before him: the king related his dreams, which Joſeph thus interpreted: From what has been ſhown to Pharaoh in his ſleep it appears, that for ſeven years to come there will be great plenty in the land of Egypt, and that a ſeven years famine will then ſucceed. Having thus declared the meaning of the dreams, he adviſed the king to provide himſelf with large granaries, and to lay up ſufficient ſtores againſt the time of ſcarcity. Pharaoh ſtood amazed at the wiſdom of this young Hebrew, and received his advice, as an oracle from God. Amongſt all his ſubjects he judged none ſo capable and ſo fit, as Joſeph, to execute a plan of that mighty conſequence, and therefore created him his vicegerent over the whole kingdom of Egypt, with an abſolute power to direct and command,

mand, as he ſhould think expedient for the common weal. To inſure him moreover a due reſpect from the people, he gave him his own ring, put a chain of gold about his neck, inveſted him with a ſilk robe, and placed him in his ſecond chariot, commanding the herald to proclaim aloud, that all ſhould bend their knee to Joſeph, whom in the Egyptian language he ſtiled the Saviour of the world.

In this manner was that illuſtrious Patriarch ſet up to public view; thus was he drawn from the obſcurity of a dungeon, and advanced to the brighteſt pitch of worldly grandeur. So ſudden and ſo great a change of fortune had been enough to turn the head of a man, leſs moderate in his deſires, or leſs ſteady in the principles of virtue: in Joſeph it made no alteration of ſentiment, no change of principle: the ſame natural goodneſs ſtill held the direction of his heart and actions. As he never had been dejected at the frowns of fortune, ſo neither was he now elated at her ſmiles. Being inveſted with a dignity ſecond to the king over all Egypt, he received his power, as from the hand of God, for the general good of mankind. Far from revenging himſelf upon thoſe, who by their ſlanders had thrown him into a dungeon, he left them to the ſecret remorſe of their own conſcience, the worſt of puniſhments, that can attend an evil action in this life. In the ordinary courſe of viſible events a change of fortune, like that of Joſeph, ſeldom occurs; but in the inviſible order of things there daily happens a change incomparably greater, when poor, ſuffering mortals are called from this vale of tears to the joys of Heaven. Joſeph's tranſlation from his priſon to a palace bears but a faint reſemblance of the glory, that God confers upon his faithful ſervants after death. The light and momentary ſufferings, which they here endure, are there crowned with a happineſs, which is equally incomprehenſible and eternal.

§ XXIII.

§ XXIII. *Joseph's brothers.* *Gen.* 42.

JOSEPH, being invested with an authority, as we have seen, that extended itself over the whole Egyptian empire, soon showed by the use he made of his power, how much the happiness of a people depends upon the wisdom of their governors. His chief study was the good of his fellow subjects, for that he knew to be the real interest of his royal master: without restraining the people in the enjoyment of their property, he prudently contrived the means, that were no burden, during the time of plenty to lay up a sufficient provision of corn for their support against the famine. At the end of seven years a raging famine began to distress the land, and it was Pharaoh's order, that all in their distress should go to Joseph. With the tenderness of a father Joseph heard their complaints and relieved their wants. By him none were despised, none rejected: his granaries were open to all, that came. The general dearth had reached as far as Chanaan, and Jacob's family with the rest was reduced to great distress. The good Patriarch being told, that corn was to be bought in Egypt, sent thither ten of his sons. Joseph knew them at first sight: they had not the least suspicion of his being their brother, and knew no more of him, than if they had never seen him. He received them with a seeming harshness, asked them, as tho' they had been strangers to him, from whence they came, and whether they were not spies. They answered with profound repect, that distress alone had forced them from home, and nothing but an honest intention of buying corn had brought them into Egypt; that they were twelve sons of the same father, that one of them no longer existed, and that the youngest of all, called Benjamin, was left behind with their father Jacob in Chanaan. The name of Benjamin touched the inmost feelings of affection in Joseph's breast, and reminded him of the cruel treatment, that he had once experienced from his unnatural brothers: he was apprehensive lest Benjamin also

A. M. 2296. *Before J. C.* 1708.

might some day or other experience the like ill usage, and therefore resolved to secure him out of their hands. He seemed to give no credit to their words, and said, that to assure himself of the truth of their story he must see Benjamin; that one of them should go home and fetch him, while the rest remained his prisoners and sureties for their brother's coming. He therefore put them in prison three days, when he ordered them again to be brought out before him. They stood whispering their thoughts to one another in their own language, little suspecting they were understood by any one there; for Joseph had spoken to them by an interpreter: they discoursed of their present affliction, and considered it as a just judgment fallen upon them for their former cruelty towards their brother Joseph. Joseph listened to and understood every word they said: his heart began to beat, his bosom heaved with fraternal affection, and the tears stole down his cheeks. He was obliged to leave the room for fear of discovering himself too soon. When he had suppressed that flow of tenderness, and wiped away his tears, he came back and told them, that he should content himself with detaining only Simeon as an hostage, and that the rest might depart. He had given secret orders, that their sacks should be filled with corn, and that the money, they had given for it, should be tied up in the mouth of each sack. Upon their return home they gave Jacob an account of all, that had passed, and particularly of the engagement they were under of carrying Benjamin into Egypt, where Simeon was detained, as a pledge of their promise. Such a tale wounded their aged father to the quick: he bemoaned his misfortunes, he talked over his children, he was inconsolable at the thought of parting with the last and dearest of his sons. Joseph, said he, is no more, Simeon is in chains, and must Benjamin be taken from me too? No, I will not part with him; to part with him would wring my very soul with grief, and carry my grey hairs in anguish to the grave.

The holy Fathers seem charmed with the relation of this history, in which they discover such singular strokes of the divine providence, which sweetly disposes and brings

brings all things to their appointed ends. The ſons of Jacob were jealous of the greatneſs, that had been foreſhown to one of their brothers: they uſed the moſt efficacious means, as they thought, to prevent it, and providence directed thoſe very means to promote it. Joſeph was forewarned from Heaven of his future greatneſs, his brothers ſought to put him out of the way of it, and that was the very way, which led him to it: they ſold him for a ſlave, and the ſtate of ſervitude opened him a paſſage to the higheſt honours: they cauſed him to be tranſported into a foreign country, and there he became the preſerver of his own. Such incidents of human life may by a profane writer be paſſed over unnoticed, or be aſcribed to chance; but by the inſpired hiſtorian they are recorded to ſerve, as a conviction to the incredulous and free thinker, that there is a God, who rules and preſides over all things here below, that no efforts or artifices of men can circumſcribe his power, or defeat his deſigns. There is no wiſdom, there is no prudence and no counſel, ſays the wiſe man, powerful enough to prevail againſt God. By his almighty will the very oppoſition, that is made by men, becomes oftentimes inſtrumental in his hand for the accompliſhment of his deſigns.

§ XXIV. *Joſeph makes himſelf known to his brothers.* Gen. 45.

THE general dearth continuing ſtill to rage with greater violence, Jacob was obliged to conſent at laſt to let Benjamin go into Egypt, leſt he ſhould ſee him die with famine in the land of Chanaan. But it was not without great perſuaſion, that he had been prevailed upon to give his conſent. Judas had in a manner extorted it from him by pledging himſelf and children for Benjamin's return. By Jacob's conſent they all ſet out again for Egypt with conſiderable preſents for the governour. Joſeph was no ſooner told, that the brothers were arrived, but he ordered his ſteward to receive and

A. M. 2297, *Before J. C.* 1703,

entertain them. They were ſurpriſed at this civil treatment, which was ſo very different from what they had experienced the time before, and knew not how to account for it. They began to ſuſpect ſome artful deſign againſt them on account of the money, they had found tied up in their ſacks of corn, and to prevent every accuſation upon that ſcore they informed the ſteward, that they had brought back the money, which ought to have been left with him the laſt time. The ſteward was very courteous, bade them be under no apprehenſion, and as a pledge of their ſafety introduced their brother Simeon. They began to feel themſelves at eaſe, they waſhed their feet, and ſet their preſents in order, before the governour came in. Joſeph entered at the appointed hour, to whom they paid the moſt reſpectful homage, and offered their preſents. He kindly returned the ſalutation, and eagerly aſked them, whether their aged father was ſtill alive, and in good health. His brother Benjamin immediately drew his eye; this, ſaid he, is your little brother, you mentioned to me? His heart at that moment melted with affection, he could juſt ſpeak to wiſh him the bleſſings of heaven, the riſing tears ſtarted from his eyes, and forced him to retire into an adjoining apartment, that they might flow without reſtraint. When the firſt flutter of his ſpirits was abated, he waſhed his face, and went back to his brothers in the room, where they were to dine. He ſat himſelf down at a different table from them, for the Egyptians were not allowed to eat with Hebrews; they ſat before him in order according to their age, and received the meat, he ſent them in great plenty; Benjamin engaged his particular attention, to whom he took care conſtantly to ſend the greateſt ſhare. The day was thus ſpent to the full ſatisfaction of the eleven brothers, and the next day appointed for their return into the land of Chanaan. Joſeph in the mean time gave orders, that their ſacks ſhould be filled with corn, and beſides the money, which was tied up in each one's ſack, as before, that his own ſilver cup ſhould be ſecretly conveyed into the ſack of Benjamin. They ſet out in the morning, but had not gone far, when Joſeph's

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steward overtook them with a complaint of their having stolen the governour's silver cup, in return for the civilities he had shown them. They were surprized to hear so odious a crime laid to their charge, for which they did not conceive, there could be the least foundation. Conscious of their innocence, they begged to be searched upon the spot, and if any one of them should be found to have the cup, they freely consented, that he should die, and the rest be made slaves. The steward answered, that the innocent should not suffer for the guilty, and that none but he, who had the cup, should become his slave. They hastily opened their sacks, and behold, Joseph's silver cup was found in the sack of Benjamin. The unsuspected discovery threw them into the utmost consternation; they knew not what to say, or what to do; they turned back into town, hastened to the governour, and flung themselves at his feet. Having no other proof, than their bare word to produce in defence of their innocence, they patiently bore his dissembled anger, and each one offered to remain his slave, if Benjamin might only be at liberty to go back to his father. You are free to go, replied Joseph, but Benjamin shall remain with me: upon which Judas, who had pledged his own children to Jacob for Benjamin's safe return, began in terms the most respectful and pathetic to represent to Joseph the promise he had made of seeing his brother safe home again, urged the respect due to a father's grey hairs, mentioned the loss of another favorite son, whom he still mourned for, and concluded by saying, that the detention of this his last and darling child would certainly sink his declining age to the grave. Joseph could refrain no longer: he bade the Egyptians leave the room: there being alone with his brothers he raised his voice, and said, I am Joseph your brother; is my father yet living? Be not afraid to approach me, I am your brother, whom you sold to be carried into Egypt. It happened by the design of an all-ruling Providence, who has thus provided for your safety. Go, hasten to my father, and let him know, that his son Joseph not only lives, but has all the land of Egypt at his disposal. Go, bring him and

your

your families hither, you shall be settled in the fertile land of Gessen: be quick, make no delay. Struck dumb with amazement, it was some time, before they could make any answer. Joseph wept, and tenderly embraced them all: with greater feeling he threw himself upon the neck of Benjamin, folding him in his arms, and clasping him close to his breast.

The bare narration of Joseph's history, say the holy Fathers, sufficiently informs us of the goodness of his heart, and of the mildness of his disposition. He is a pattern for every Christian to follow in the pardon of injuries. He said not a word of the malice of his offenders, he excused the action, he put the best construction he could upon their conduct, and so far was he from making them any reproach, that he even tried to dissipate their fears, which the consciousness of their guilt must naturally have caused within them. Invested with full power to punish offenders, as he pleased, he employed it all for the good of those, who had intended him the greatest evils, and their frowns of envy he repaid with the sweetest smiles of brotherly benevolence. The admirable charity of this saint is a figure of that unparalleled goodness, which we adore in Jesus Christ, who being sold by his own brethren, not only pardoned them for the cruel death, they put him to, but also made the blood, he spilt upon his cross, the price of their salvation, and the ransom of their souls.

§ XXV. *Jacob goes into Egypt.* *Gen.* 46.

A. M. 2298, *Before J. C.* 1702. THE sons of Israel, loaded with stores and rich presents from their brother Joseph, hastened home, as fast as they could, to impart the happy tidings to their father. The joy and surprise of the good Patriarch to hear, that his son Joseph was not only alive, but also had the command of all Egypt, were so great, that he seemed in a manner stupified at first, and out of his senses. When he recovered himself, and was inform'd at leisure of the particulars,

particulars, that had happened, he ſaid, it is ſufficient, if my ſon Joſeph be only living, I will go, and embrace him, before I die. Joſeph had already ſent wains and beaſts of burden for the convenience of tranſporting his father & brethren with their goods & families into Egypt. In an expedition of ſuch laſting conſequence to his whole family, the religious Patriarch would not proceed without firſt informing himſelf of the will, and imploring the bleſſing of the Moſt-high. He ſlew victims to the God of his father Iſaac; and God in an audible manner told him not to doubt of going into Egypt, where under the divine protection he ſhould grow into a numerous nation, and in proceſs of time be brought back from thence, after his eyes ſhould be there cloſed in death by his ſon Joſeph. Being extremely comforted by this viſion, Jacob loaded his whole ſubſtance upon Pharaoh's waggons, and with his eleven ſons, their wives and little ones, to the number of ſeventy in all, began his journey towards the land of Egypt. Judas was ſent before to appriſe Joſeph of his father's coming. Joſeph ſet off with a becoming retinue to meet him, and proceeded as far as Geſſen. The moment his father's carriage came in ſight, he got out of his chariot, and reſpectfully advanced on foot to receive him. As ſoon as they met, they ruſhed into each other's arms, they cordially embraced, they clung for ſome time together without being able to utter a ſingle word. The exceſs of their joy was too high for either of them to ſpeak what they felt. They wept, and their tears beſt witneſſed the glowing ſentiments of their hearts in this unexpected interview. Joſeph conducted both his father and his brothers into the royal city, and preſented them to the king. Pharaoh gave them a gracious reception, and according to their deſire allotted them the fertile ſpot of Geſſen for their place of reſidence. There they ſettled unmoleſted and ſeparated from the Egyptians; there under the protection of God, and by the particular care of Joſeph they lived ſtrangers to the famine, which was ſeverely felt by their neighbours round.

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Truly admirable, says Saint Chryſoſtom, is the conduct of Almighty God with regard to his Elect. Through various trials by a continual ſucceſſion of good and adverſe fortune, he trains them up to virtue. He tempers their ſucceſs with affliction, leſt they ſhould ſwell too high, and then viſits them again with comfort, leſt they ſhould ſink beneath the weight of continued ſufferings. It was no loſs either to Jacob or to Joſeph to have been deprived of each other for a time: the joy, they felt at meeting again, made ample amends for their paſt afflictions. The fortune, that afterwards attended the deſcendants of Jacob in Egypt, was the very reverſe of his. They at firſt experienced every advantage, they could wiſh for, and were in the end oppreſſed with all the evils, that an infidel and barbarous people could inflict. For Egypt, that is to ſay the world, is always to be dreaded by every true Iſraelite; notwithſtanding its careſſes, it is not to be relied upon. It varies in its favours and its friendſhip, as beſt ſuits its intereſt. Both its promiſes and its flatteries are always to be ſuſpected by the wary Chriſtian. It often ſmiles, whilſt it fixes its ſting, and pampers the body, while it kills the ſoul.

§ XXVI. *Midwives of Egypt. Exod.* 1.

A. M. 2315, *Before J. C.* 1685. JACOB enjoyed a comfortable old age, during the ſeventeen years he reſided in Egypt. Upon the report of his being ſick, Joſeph, the bright pattern of filial piety, haſtened with his two ſons, Ephraim and Manaſſe, to pay the laſt duty to his dying father. The venerable Patriarch raiſed himſelf up in the bed at his ſon's approach, and ſpoke to him of the inheritance, which God had promiſed to his ſeed in the land of Chanaan, whither he deſired his remains might be carried after death, and depoſited with his father's. Joſeph promiſed him they ſhould, and preſented him his two ſons, Manaſſe and Ephraim. Jacob adopted them for his own, promiſed them each a ſhare in the lands of Chanaan, and laying his hands upon their heads, bleſſed them both.

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He called his other ſons around his bed, and gave to each a ſpecial bleſſing; the moſt memorable is that, which he ſpoke to Judah. It expreſſes, that from his race the Meſſias, *The expectation of Nations*, ſhould be born; and that this great event ſhould happen at or near the time, when the ſovereign power ſhould be entirely taken away from the Jewiſh nation. Jacob died in the hundred and forty ſeventh year of his age. As ſoon as he had breathed his laſt, Joſeph threw himſelf upon the face of his deceaſed father, and poured out a torrent of tears. He gave orders for his phyſicians to embalm the body, and when the ſeventy days that Egypt mourned for him, were expired, he aſked Pharaoh leave to ſee it buried, as his father had deſired, in Chanaan. The king's whole court, and all the ancients of Egypt accompanied the funeral, and Jacob was with great pomp depoſited in the double cave near Mambre, by the ſide of Abraham and Iſaac. Joſeph having paid theſe laſt honours to his father with a truly filial piety, haſtened back into Egypt, where he remained ſole depoſitary of the royal power and authority, as long as he lived. His brethren expreſſing ſome apprehenſion, leſt he might take an opportunity from their father's death to repay them for the injuries, they had formerly done him, he aſſured them with tears in his eyes, that they had nothing to fear, that they ſhould always find him their friend and protector, that he would feed both them and their little ones. With the ſpirit of prophecy he declared, that after his death God would viſit and lead them forth from thence into the land, which he had promiſed to Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, bidding them remember, when that time ſhould come, to carry away his bones with them out of Egypt, that they might be interred with his father's in the land of Chanaan. Joſeph lived to ſee his ſons children unto the third generation, and then died, being a hundred and ten years old, during eighty of which he had governed Egypt with great renown of juſtice and wiſdom. His body was embalmed and depoſited in one of the Egyptian tombs, where it reſted till the departure of the Iſraelites out of that country.

A. M. 2427, *Before J. C.* 1573. Within a few years after Joſeph's death, a total change of affairs took place in the kingdom of Egypt. A new king, known alſo by the name of Pharaoh, a name adopted, as it ſeems, by moſt of the Egyptian kings, forgetting the glory of Joſeph's adminiſtration, ſhowed himſelf no friend to the Hebrew people. Far from protecting them, as his predeceſſors had done, he thought to afflict and deſtroy them. Growing jealous of their power at ſeeing their progeny increaſe, he artfully attempted to diminiſh their numbers under pretence of rendering them ſerviceable to the ſtate. For that purpoſe he employed them in the public works, which he ſet on foot, and impoſed ſuch heavy burdens on them, as he concluded muſt break their ſtrength, and ruin their conſtitutions. But as the Church was afterwards to gather ſtrength from its wordly afflictions, ſo did the Iſraelites at that time increaſe the faſter for being oppreſſed. Pharaoh took the barbarous reſolution of having all their male children ſtrangled, as ſoon as they were born, and charged the midwives of Egypt with its execution. The compaſſionate women, having the fear of God before their eyes, refuſed to imbrue their hands in innocent blood. Pharaoh called them to an account, for not having executed his orders; they were terrified at his threats, and made uſe of an officious lie in their excuſe, ſaying, that the Hebrew women were not like unto thoſe of the country, and were delivered, before any midwife could come to them. The king was exaſperated to find himſelf thus diſappointed in his ſchemes of ſecret murder, threw off the maſk, and gave a general order, that all the Hebrew boys, without exception, ſhould be thrown into the river Nile.

It ſeems as if every tender feeling and ſentiment of humanity had been baniſhed from the breaſts of the Egyptians, excepting a few women, who out of compaſſion to an injured people expoſed themſelves to the reſentment of a cruel prince. They made indeed an excuſe for their diſobedience by a lie, which was a weakneſs; yet God rewarded them for their piety towards the helpleſs

helpleſs children. Superlatively happy would they have been, ſays Saint Auſtin, if to their feelings of humanity they had united the love of truth, and had generouſly choſen to expoſe their own lives rather, than ſave them by a lie. After having been reſolute enough to preſerve the lives of the innocent at the hazard of their own, glorious had it been for them to have gone one ſtep further, and met the final ſtroke rather than have fled from it by a breach of truth. Their earthly houſe of clay, ſays the ſame holy Father, might probably have been demoliſhed by it, but in recompenſe thereof they had dwelt eternally in heaven.

§ XXVII. *Moyſes ſaved from the Nile. Exod. 2.*

WHILST the Iſraelites were groaning under the load of oppreſſion, and an ungrateful king was exerting his utmoſt malice to extinguiſh a people, to whom his predeceſſors had been indebted for their crown and proſperity, Amram the grandſon of Levi had a ſon by his wife, whoſe name was Jochabed. Love prompted the mother to uſe every ingenious artifice to conceal her child, whoſe comely countenance made him ſtill more dear. But as Pharaoh's order was executed with the moſt unrelenting barbarity, ſhe was compelled at the end of three months either to give him up, or to periſh with him. She therefore contrived, as it were, a cradle of bulruſhes, which ſhe twiſted together, and lined the inſide with pitch. In this kind of baſket ſhe laid her little infant, and expoſed him on the ſedgy bank of the Nile, telling her daughter to ſtay near the place, and cautiouſly wait the event. Providence ſo ordained, that Pharaoh's daughter, attended by her maids, ſhould then come to that very ſpot with an intent to bathe in the river. She immediately eſpied the baſket, and being curious to know what was in it, ſent one of her attendants to fetch it. She opened it, and found a beautiful infant crying, and ſtretching out its little hands as it were for help; ſhe was ſoftened into

A. M. 2433, *Before J. C.* 1567,

pity, and reſolved to ſave it. The ſiſter of the infant, who was all this while upon the watch, narrowly obſerved, and heard what was ſaid. She drew nearer by degrees to the princeſs, and at laſt ventured to aſk her, if ſhe wanted a nurſe for the child, and offered her ſervice to call one of the Hebrew women. Being told ſhe might, ſhe ran to call her mother. The mother came, and full of ſecret joy received her child from the princeſs, who promiſed to reward her well for her trouble in taking care of him. When the boy was grown up, ſhe preſented him to the princeſs, who adopted him for her ſon, and called him Moyſes, becauſe he had been ſaved from the waters: for Moyſes in the Egyptian language ſignifies water.

The holy Fathers ſeem loſt in admiration, when they conſider this ſaintly man, who was the miniſter of the old law, as Jeſus Chriſt is of the new, preſerved in the ſame wonderful manner, as his Saviour was, amidſt ſo many thouſands of infants, whom a tyrant's fury cut off in the bud of life. It is in ſuch inſtances of his fatherly providence, that God ſhows himſelf to be the ſovereign ruler of all things, and that nothing is ſo eaſy to him, as to defeat the deepeſt ſchemes, that human policy can form in contradiction to his eternal deſigns. He ſeems pleaſed to exert a more viſible power againſt thoſe, who preſume to attack him by open force. In vain did Pharaoh ſtrive to extirpate the Hebrew people; he nouriſhed within his palace, as his grandſon, the very man, who was to deliver them out of his hands. The mother, whoſe fears had drove her to expoſe her ſon to the mercileſs waves, not only received him back again into her arms, but was even paid for nurſing and taking care of him, a care more precious to her, than all the treaſures of Egypt. The ſtep, that was intended to rob the infant of his life, was the firſt advance towards his future greatneſs. By a ſpecial Providence Moyſes was delivered from the waters of the Nile, that at his command the ſon of that prince, who had thrown him there, might be ſwallowed up in the waters of the ſea. Overwhelmed in the ſame abyſs periſhed likewiſe thoſe Egyptian chiefs,

who

who had been the miniſters of their maſter's tyranny. To all, who have not given up their pretenſions to reaſon and common ſenſe, theſe inſtances of a ſuperior providence muſt be a convincing proof, that there is a God, who preſides over and directs the ways of men; that the moſt vigorous efforts of men are but mere weakneſs againſt the divine arm, and that to diſpute the power of the Moſt-high is a folly not leſs extravagant than impious.

§ XXVIII. *The burning buſh.* *Exod.* 3.

MOYSES ſpent the years of his youth in the royal palace of Egypt, where he was treated as Pharaoh's grandſon. Having attained the fortieth year of his age, he began to think that a life, ſo miraculouſly preſerved by God, ought not to be idly ſpent amidſt the pleaſures of a court. Under the title of adoption he enjoyed every worldly comfort, tho' by birth a Hebrew, whilſt his brethren were groaning under the moſt oppreſſive ſlavery. Being of the ſame race and religion with them, he ſaw no privilege, that he could have to exempt him from ſharing in the ſame fortune. As he was one day taking his walk, and muſing upon that ſubject, he found an Egyptian man beating a Hebrew in a moſt cruel manner. Moyſes was too partial to his countryman to remain an idle ſpectator; in the warmth of his zeal he ſtruck the Egyptian, and killed him upon the ſpot. He looked round, and ſeeing no one near, thought he had not been ſeen, buried the body in the ſand and walked off. In his round next day he met with two Iſraelites, that were quarelling with one another: he interfered, and endeavoured to reconcile them; upon which one of them rudely aſked him, What he meant, and whether he intended to kill either of them, as he had killed the Egyptian the day before? Moyſes by that found he was diſcovered, and thought it neceſſary for his ſecurity to leave the country. He therefore retired

A. M. 2473. *Before J. C.* 1527.

acroſs

acroſs the red ſea into the land of Madian, which is a part of Arabia Petroſa. In Madian there lived a prieſt, whoſe name was Raguel, otherwiſe Jethro, who had ſeven daughters. Theſe young women daily tended their father's flocks, and one day leading them to drink, as uſual, at a certain ſpring, they found Moyſes there. By his dreſs and language they took him for an Egyptian, but by the ſervice he did them in helping their flocks to drink, they found him to be a good man. They ſpoke advantageouſly of him to their father, who deſired to ſee him. Moyſes was therefore ſent for, who being pleaſed with a certain air of goodneſs, that he ſaw in Jethro, conſented to live with him. He took a liking alſo to Sephora his eldeſt daughter, married her by mutual conſent, and for forty years together took care of her father's flocks, that fed in the deſert.

A. M. 2513, *Before J. C.* 1491. Moyſes had one day led his flocks into the inner parts of the deſert towards the mountain of Horeb, where he ſaw a buſh on fire without its being conſumed. Struck at the wonderful appearance, he advanced to examine it more cloſely, when a voice from amidſt the flames bade him ſtop, and take off his ſhoes, for that ſacred was the ground, on which he ſtood. God told him, that the cries of the afflicted Iſraelites had penetrated the Heavens, that an end ſhould be put to their labours, and that he was the man, choſen to lead them out of the Egyptian ſlavery into the land of promiſe. Moyſes humbly begged to be excuſed from an undertaking, for which he deemed himſelf wholly unfit; but God inſiſted upon his obedience, and by two miracles convinced him of the divine power, that ſhould be always at hand to ſupport him. He firſt of all changed his rod into a ſerpent, and from a ſerpent into a rod. After that he bade him put his hand into his boſom, which in an inſtant was covered with a leproſy, and as ſoon made clean again. Moyſes notwithſtanding was ſtill unwilling to conſent, till being terrified by the threat of God's diſpleaſure, he at laſt accepted of the charge, which he could no longer refuſe without a ſin.

Upon

Upon that he took leave of Jethro, and haſtened back into Egypt for the conſolation of his countrymen.

The holy Fathers look upon the burning buſh, as an emblem of what happens to the Elect of God. Perſecuted by a jealous world, they remain unhurt and unimpaired by the flames of affliction, that ſurround them: for God himſelf is in the midſt of them to ſupport them by his grace, and to render them more illuſtrious by their ſufferings. Saint Gregory dwells upon the example of humility, that Moyſes gave in refuſing to take upon him the charge of conducting the people of God, tho' ſo qualified with talents both of grace and nature. Little in his own eyes he deemed himſelf unworthy of the honour, and unequal to the arduous taſk; nor was he to be prevailed upon to conſent to his own preferment, but by the evidence of miracles, and expreſs order of God himſelf. Inſtructive as ſuch an example is to all Chriſtians, it is particularly ſo to thoſe, ſays the ſame holy doctor, who are raſh enough to covet the direction and command of others. For ſuch is the preſumption of human weakneſs, that the leſs virtuous and the leſs qualified a perſon is, often the more deſirous is he of a charge, which the greateſt Saints have always been afraid of, as above their abilities. Men, who know not how to guide themſelves, wiſh to have the guidance of others; unable to anſwer for their own conduct, they thruſt themſelves forward to be anſwerable for the conduct of others.

End of the third age.

Names

Names and ages of the Patriarchs of the third age.

	A. M.	born.	died.	aged.
Abraham		2008	2183	175
Isaac		2108	2288	180
Jacob		2168	2315	147
Levi		2255	2392	137
Moyses		2433		

of Amram and Jochabed, the grand-children of Levi, who had lived 33 years with Isaac, and Isaac had lived 50 years with Sem. From this and the two foregoing tables it appears, that Moyses has written nothing in his sacred history, but what was still fresh in the memory of men.

Fourth

Fourth age of the world.

From the delivery of the Iſraelites out of Egypt 2513, to the foundation of Salomon's temple 2992; comprehending the ſpace of 479 years.

§ I. *Moyſes before Pharaoh. Exod.* 5.

PHARAOH the tyrant, who had declared ſo unnatural a war againſt the Hebrew children, was now dead, and ſucceeded by his ſon of the ſame name, a prince equally cruel and tyrannical in his diſpoſition. This is the Pharaoh, before whom Moyſes and Aaron his brother preſented themſelves for leave to go with the people for three days into the wilderneſs, where God had commanded them to offer him a ſacrifice. Pharaoh received them with great harſhneſs, treated them as rebels, and ſaid, he knew nothing of the God they talked of. He aſcribed their petition to a ſpirit of revolt, and rejected it with ſcorn, telling them, he ſhould give them ſomething elſe to think of. He accordingly gave ſtrict orders to his officers to impoſe new burdens upon the mutinous Hebrews, as he called them, and to exact their daily taſks with the utmoſt rigour. The people finding themſelves thus loaded with new grievances, inſtead of being relieved by the remonſtrances, that had been made in their favour, began to complain moſt bitterly; and thro' a ſtrange but common weakneſs of mind, turned their complaints againſt the two brothers. They loudly murmured againſt Moyſes and Aaron, as if they had been the cauſe of thoſe very evils, which they had been labouring to remove. It is the treatment, which the zealous paſtors of the Church have often met with thro' every

A. M. 2513, *Before J. C.* 1487.

every age, in return for the pains, they have taken for the ſervice of their flocks.

The ears of God being always open to the cries of the poor and needy, he commanded Moyſes to preſent himſelf a ſecond time before Pharaoh for the deliverance of his people. Full of confidence Moyſes therefore went to the king, and on the part of God repeated the ſubject of his commiſſion. He backed his petition by a miracle, as a proof of his miſſion from God, and in the king's preſence changed Aaron's rod into a ſerpent. Pharaoh had his magicians ready to mimic the divine power. By the help of their black art they undertook to perform the like prodigy, and in effect changed their rods alſo into ſerpents. This prevented the good effect, which Moyſes's miracle was likely to have had upon the king's mind, and nothing more was done at that time. God ſoon afterwards commanded his ſervant Moyſes to go for the third time, and in his name to make a more urgent demand on Pharaoh for his conſent. The place of conference was upon the banks of the Nile. Undaunted at the appearance of ſavage majeſty, Moyſes ſpoke with a manly firmneſs, but yet ſoftened his diſcourſe with a gentle meekneſs and modeſty of action, that was natural to him. The king anſwered him with boiſterous threats, and ſternly refuſed to let the people go. Upon which Moyſes quietly addreſſed himſelf to Aaron, bidding him ſtretch his rod over the ſurface of the Nile, and the waters not only of that river, but of all the rivers of Egypt, were in an inſtant changed into blood, and the fiſhes died therein.

This change of the rivers into blood is called the firſt plague of Egypt, and hardened was the heart of Pharaoh not to bend by ſuch a ſtroke. His magicians indeed by doing the like wonders, as Moyſes did, miſled his judgment, and gave a ſpecious pretext of obſtinacy to a prince, who only ſought to find out reaſons, not to yield. Thoſe reaſons were inſufficient to excuſe him from guilt: he plainly ſaw, that the magicians were not only outdone, but likewiſe reſtrained in their power by Moyſes, ſo as not to be able to remove the plague, they had occaſioned.

casioned. They had changed water into blood, as well as Moyses, but they could not, like him, change that blood into water again. To see the laws of nature altered, and brought back into their first state at the word of Him, who spoke and acted in the name of the living God, was more than sufficient to have opened the eyes of a common infidel: but to a man, who is wilfully blind, no evidence is clear; and on a heart, that grows harder like iron by the strokes it receives, no impression can easily be made. By a terrible, tho' just judgment of God, such is the man, who in punishment of his obstinacy is once abandoned to the malicious desires of his own heart.

§ II. *Plagues of Egypt. Exod.* 8.

THE first plague, by which God had sought to make Pharaoh sensible of his duty, having proved ineffectual, was followed by nine others. An incredible number of frogs, that swarmed thro' every place, and in every house of Egypt, was the second plague, and, according to saint Austin, exhibits a striking likeness of those Christians, who spend themselves in empty words, and know no piety, but in the unmeaning motion of their lips. The sciniphes, a small flying insect according to Philo, produced from the dust, were the third plague, and resemble those wrangling sectaries, who only exist and thrive by their restless spirit of altercation and dispute. The fourth plague was an infinity of flies, which terribly incommoded Pharaoh and his people, and denote those peevish sallies of a fretful temper, that tease away the peace and happiness of human society. The fifth was a grievous murrain amongst the cattle, which strongly indicates, that they, who like the irrational animal, guide themselves only by their senses, shall be struck with a spiritual pestilence, that kills the soul. The sixth inflicted boils and swelling blains upon men and beasts. The purulent and angry red, that appears in an ulcer- *A. M.* 2513. *Before J. C.* 1487.

ated body, bears a viſible reſemblance with the inward ſwellings of a ſoul, tranſported with the paſſion either of pride or anger. The ſeventh plague was a ſtorm of driving hail, accompanied with dreadful lightnings and thunders, that broke down and deſtroyed every thing, on which it fell. Such is the boiſterous fury of the wicked in puſhing on their malicious deſigns, till they break or melt away, like hail ſtones, and periſh amidſt the ruins, they have made. The eighth plague were the locuſts, that devoured every green thing, which the hail had ſpared. To theſe locuſts all falſe witneſſes are properly compared, as with their mouth, like them, they equally hurt and deſtroy. The ninth was a palpable darkneſs, which ſat upon the land for three days throughout Egypt, excepting where the Iſraelites inhabited, and repreſents that ſad obſcurity, which overclouds the ſoul of the impious, while a bright and cheerful ſerenity ſhines upon the face of the virtuous.

Such were the firſt temporal chaſtiſements, by which a merciful God ſought to reclaim an obdurate ſinner, and to make him ſenſible of his duty. In this viſible exertion of the divine power we are to obſerve, that theſe plagues were not inflicted upon Pharaoh and his people all at once, but at certain intervals of time. A ſecond ſcourge was not employed, till Pharaoh's hardened malice had rendered the foregoing void of its intended effect. Pharaoh's ſubmiſſion to the divine will on any one day would have prevented his chaſtiſement on the next. From the very firſt plague the magicians ſaw, and in the third acknowledged the agency of a divine power far ſuperior to their own. To an omnipotent God, ſays the wiſe man, it had been as eaſy to let looſe the lions upon his enemies at firſt, and without any previous notice to deſtroy them with one blow. But in compaſſion to the miſery of human weakneſs, he tempered his juſtice with tender mercy; he contented himſelf with leſſer puniſhments in the beginning; he ſought to rouſe the Egyptians to a ſenſe of their duty by degrees, and by milder ſtrokes informed them, what they had to fear, ſhould his anger be once raiſed to its heigth. We cannot be too

thoroughly

thoroughly convinced of the truth, that God is always to be feared, that no mortal power can pretend to reſiſt his might, and that in aſſerting his own divine rights, if ſofter methods will not do, he will then apply the moſt ſevere. For the divine juſtice is not to be outdone by human malice, nor are the mercies of God to be defeated by the obſtinacy of his enemies.

§ III. *The Paſchal Lamb. Exod.* 12.

THE nine foregoing plagues having had no effect upon the heart of Pharaoh, God reſolved upon a tenth, more ſtriking and fatal, than any thing that had yet happened. Before he let fall this laſt ſtroke of his vengeance upon the Egyptians, he commanded the Iſraelites to prepare and eat the Lamb, which he had told them to have in readineſs, ever ſince the tenth day of the month; preſcribing at the ſame time the manner and the ceremony, which he would have them obſerve in eating it. Each family, ſays the ſacred text, ſhall take a lamb, and on the fourteenth day of the month ſhall ſacrifice him in the evening, and ſprinkle the doors of their houſes with the blood thereof: that night they ſhall eat the fleſh, roaſted at the fire, with unleavened bread and wild lettices. While they eat it, they ſhall ſtand with their clothes girt up, with ſhoes upon their feet, and ſtaves in their hands, like travellers ready for their journey. The obedient Iſraelites punctually fulfilled every circumſtance of the order. On the ſame night God ſent his exterminating Angel into every houſe in Egypt, that was not ſprinkled with the blood of the lamb, and ſlew every firſt-born both of man and beaſt. Struck at the ſudden death of his eldeſt ſon, Pharaoh roſe in the dead of the night, and by the mournful cries, that were heard around, he was convinced, that the ſame melancholy diſaſter had befallen every family in Egypt at the ſame hour. The conſternation was univerſal: from the royal palace to the meaneſt cot, there was not a houſe

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houſe without a dead body. Pharaoh's obduracy was at laſt overcome; he ſent for Moyſes and Aaron, and in compliance with their requeſt bade them go with their people, with their flocks and herds, into the deſert, and there ſacrifice to their God for three days. The Egyptians alſo preſſed them to be gone, and lent them the moſt valuable furniture they had, on that ſolemn occaſion. The very next morning Moyſes led forth the whole hoſt of Iſrael into the deſert, which lay in their way towards the land of promiſe; nor was there a ſingle perſon left, or ſick amongſt them. To the number of almoſt ſix hundred thouſand fighting men, beſides women and children, the Iſraelites began to march out of Egypt four hundred and thirty years, ſince Abraham had firſt taken refuge there againſt the famine, and two hundred and fifteen, ſince Jacob had gone thither with his whole family. It was by the ſpecial direction of Almighty God, that they carried away the richeſt ſpoils of Egypt, the fine clothes, the gold and ſilver plate of its inhabitants, not only as a recompenſe for the painful ſervices they had done them, but alſo as a figurative mark, that the Chriſtian Church ſhould be alſo furniſhed with temporal ſupplies for the external ſupport and ornament of the divine ſervice.

This deliverance of the Iſraelites from the ſlavery of Egypt is the figure of that moſt ſingular mercy, by which the world has been ſince reſcued from the tyranny of Satan thro' the blood of Jeſus Chriſt, the immaculate lamb of God. If that divine victim had not been immolated on the croſs for man's redemption, the unhappy ſons of Adam would have been only able to weep, they could not have freed themſelves from the ſlavery of ſin. Jeſus Chriſt by his death has ſet them free, and by his croſs has opened to them a paſſage to their promiſed country. To nouriſh in our hearts a due ſenſe of gratitude for a favour ſo unparalleled, and yet ſo unmerited on our part, we cannot too often or too ſeriouſly reflect, by whom we were once oppreſſed, and by whom we have been ſo bountifully redeemed. The reflection will teach us to value our preſent happineſs, and to guard in future againſt

againſt the wretched ſtate, from which we have been delivered To be zealous in the ſervice of Jeſus Chriſt, who can alone preſerve us in the freedom he has purchaſed us, and carefully to ſhun, whatever tends to throw us back into the ſervitude of ſin, is a duty both of gratitude to God, and of charity to ourſelves.

§ IV. *The Red Sea. Exod.* 14.

PHARAOH had conſented, as we have ſeen, to let Moyſes go with the Iſraelites into the wilderneſs for three days to perform their religious duties to almighty God. The three days were elapſed, and no Iſraelites returned. Pharaoh began to ſuſpect, that they had impoſed upon him, and intended to eſcape out of his hands. Full of thoſe ſurmiſes, and regardleſs of the ſcourges, which lay ſtill heavy upon his kingdom, he reſolved to purſue them: his ſubjects likewiſe being afraid of loſing the coſtly clothes and plate, which they had lent to the Iſraelites, were eager to ſecond his deſign. Pharaoh therefore aſſembled his troops in haſte, put himſelf at their head, and directed his march thro' the deſert to the Red ſea, where he found his enemies encamped upon the ſhore. The approach and terror of his arms threw the defenceleſs Iſraelites into a deadly conſternation. Cloſely preſſed on one ſide by an enraged tyrant, who was ready to fall upon them, and hemmed in on the other by the ſea, they began to abandon themſelves to deſpair. For they forgot the wonders, which God had ſo lately wrought in their favour, and grew diffident of the powerful providence, which from the moment of their departure had watched over them, in the form of a cloud by day, and of a pillar of fire by night. They crouded round Moyſes, and inſultingly aſked him, if Egypt could not as well have provided them with a grave, and what need there was of bringing them to be butchered in the wilderneſs? Moyſes in the mildeſt terms endeavoured to ſooth them into temper, and to rouſe their drooping ſpi-

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tits by aſſuring them of the divine protection. Pharaoh had put his troops in motion, and was advancing to attack them. Moyſes retreated, till he came to the very edge of the ſea, when ſtretching forth his arm over the profound abyſs, as God had commanded him, the waters were ſuddenly divided by a mighty wind, and opened him a paſſage to the oppoſite ſhore. The Iſraelites ruſhed into the dry hollow of the deep, wondering at the watery bounds, that ſtood ſuſpended like a wall upon their right and left, as they marched thro' the middle. The Angel, who had hitherto gone before them at night in the form of a fiery cloud, ſhifted his ſtation to the rear, and hindered the Egyptians from coming too cloſe upon them. Pharaoh ſeemed inſenſible of the miracle; blinded by paſſion, he only thought of ſatiating his revenge, and fancying the paſſage to be as free and as ſafe for him, as for the Iſraelites, ruſhed on headlong after them with all his hoſt. He had advanced into the middle of the abyſs, before he became ſenſible of the diſtinction, that God makes between his friends and enemies. For from amidſt the fiery cloud there appeared ſuch glaring ſtrokes of the divine wrath againſt him and his Egyptians, that in the utmoſt terror and confuſion they began to turn back. Moyſes, who with all his followers had by that time reached the other ſhore, ſtretched forth his hand again upon the ſea, and called back the waters to their natural ſtate. Shut up within the boſom of the deep the whole Egyptian army periſhed with their chariots and horſes; for of them all not ſo much as a ſingle man eſcaped.

Miracles of this nature, never fail in their effect of making an impreſſion on the human mind, as they carry with them ſuch convincing evidence of the divine power. Prodigies, that affect our outward ſenſes ſeldom paſs unnoticed, as the holy Fathers remark: there are likewiſe other prodigies of a much ſuperior, becauſe of a more ſpiritual nature; prodigies, in which we are more immediately concerned, and which nevertheleſs we ſcarce attend to. We ſtand aſtoniſhed, ſays Saint Bernard, to ſee the Hebrew people ſo miraculouſly reſcued

ed from the ſlavery of Egypt, while we take no notice of a ſoul, that by a ſincere repentance and converſion is delivered from the ſlavery of her paſſions. Pharaoh is the tyrant, who was overthrown in the firſt inſtance, and the Devil is vanquiſhed in the ſecond: in the firſt were overturned the chariots and the horſemen of an earthly prince, and in the ſecond is defeated the united force of concupiſcence and ſin. The victory gained by the Iſraelites was over men made of fleſh and blood like themſelves; the triumph of a penitent ſoul is over the aerial powers and the tremendous prince of darkneſs. To men, who judge of things as they ſtrike their ſenſes, the firſt may ſeem more wonderful; but to God, by whoſe power all things are done, the ſecond is more glorious.

§ V. *The Manna.* *Exod.* 16.

THE paſſage which had ſo miraculouſly been opened thro' the red ſea, ſtruck the moſt inſenſible of the Jews with aſtoniſhment. Penetrated with a due ſenſe of gratitude, they joined with Moyſes in ſinging the moſt ſublime hymns of thankſgiving to God for his mercy towards them. The women likewiſe, with Mary the ſiſter of Moyſes at their head, tuned their canticles of joy to the ſound of the harp, and other muſical inſtruments. But theſe good diſpoſitions of the people laſted not long. They no ſooner began to feel ſome inconveniencies for want of proviſions, than their ſongs were changed into murmurs and complaints againſt Moyſes, whom they made anſwerable for every accidental hardſhip, they met with. Moyſes, like a faithful miniſter of the Moſt-high, ſtrongly reprimanded them for their behaviour, as grievouſly injurious to God himſelf. For the complaints you have made, ſaid he, are not againſt us, they are againſt the Lord, in whoſe name we act. Be but convinced, that the Lord himſelf watches over you for your preſervation, and he will give you your *A. M.* 2513, *Before J. C.* 1487.

fill. They waited not long, before the promiſe was accompliſhed. For in the evening there came into the camp a prodigious flight of quails, of which the people killed as many, as they choſe: and the next morning there appeared upon the ground ſomething like the criſpy ſubſtance of a hoar froſt, ſmall and white, which they called Manna, and which from that time never failed them for their ſupport during the forty years, that they wandered in the wilderneſs. Upon ſhowing their ſurpriſe at the firſt appearance of a thing ſo new and unexpected, Moyſes informed the people, that this was the bread, which God had ſent them from Heaven for the nouriſhment of life, that every morning before ſun-riſe they were to gather as much of it, as ſhould be neceſſary for the preſent day, but that for the more religious obſervance of the Sabbath they ſhould on the day before gather a double quantity. By theſe injunctions to his people God has been pleaſed to ſignify to us, that we ought to prevent the ſun in our acts of prayer and thankſgiving to him, and that we are not to be over ſolicitous about the neceſſaries of life, nor anxious to hoard up a quantity of things, that we ſhall never want. In conſequence of theſe injunctions we muſt obſerve, that the Manna corrupted if kept longer or in greater quantity, than was requiſite for any one day beſides the Sabbath, and if not gathered early in the morning, it melted away, ſoon after the ſun was up.

The Manna is manifeſtly a figure of the holy Euchariſt, as Jeſus Chriſt witneſſes in his Goſpel. Miraculous was its production, and moſt wonderful were its effects. It had both the effect and taſte of delicious food during the time, that the Iſraelites were upon their journey to the land of promiſe. It is by the Scripture called the bread of Heaven, and the bread of Angels. But as the reality is always more perfect, than its figure, ſo ſtill more miraculous in itſelf, and more wonderful in its effects is the Euchariſtical food, which Jeſus Chriſt has given to his Church. This is truly the living bread, deſcending from Heaven, with which he nouriſhes, comforts and ſtrengthens our ſouls during their pilgrimage

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on earth. Hence the warmeſt ſentiments of gratitude are due to our bleſſed Lord for ſo ſalutary an inſtitution. A lively faith and an ardent deſire of true happineſs ought to keep us ſo habitually diſpoſed, that we may be worthy each day to receive and profit by it. As long as ſuch ſentiments animated the Hebrew people in the deſert, they joyfully received and reliſhed their heavenly food; but as their piety grew cold, they alſo grew diſguſted, and wiſhed again for the fleſh-pots and leeks of Egypt. A ſimilar conduct is but too often viſible in thoſe Chriſtians, who being cold in their devotion, and weary in the divine ſervice, come to the holy table without being worthily diſpoſed, and ſo eat to their own condemnation, not diſcerning the body of our Lord.

§ VI. *Water iſſues from the rock. Exod.* 17.

A POWER, ſo miraculouſly and ſo conſtantly diſplayed by Almighty God in favour of his choſen people, ought to have removed every fear, and prevented every ground of diffidence for the future. But new trials created new fears, and riſing difficulties renewed the clamours of a people naturally mutinous and inclined to rebel. The country, thro' which they marched, was a dry and ſandy deſert: they came to a place called Raphidim, where no water was to be found: impatient of thirſt, they grew ſeditious. A ſpirit of revolt ſpread itſelf thro' the camp; they vented their ſpleen againſt Moyſes, whom they threatened to ſtone to death for having brought them out of Egypt. Of all men living Moyſes was one of the moſt meek and gentle: the critical ſituation he was then in, afforded him no refuge, but in God. To God he had recourſe by humble prayer: he earneſtly begged the divine power to ſupport him in the diſcharge of a duty, which he never had undertaken, but in obedience to his holy will. God was pleaſed with his humility, heard his prayer, and told him to take the rod, with which he had changed *A. M.* 2518, *Before J. C.* 1487.

the waters of the Nile into blood, and to go with the ancients of Iſrael to the rock of Horeb, where his name ſhould be glorified, and the people be relieved. Moyſes went accordingly to the place appointed, being accompanied by the ancients, and followed by a vaſt croud of the common people; he ſtood with the rod in his hand, he ſtruck the rock in their preſence, and an inſtantaneous ſtream iſſued out. They quenched their thirſt, and were ſatisfied. This ſtream is a figure of thoſe flowing graces, that are drawn from the wounds of Chriſt crucified: for Chriſt is the rock, from whence the ſtreams of ſalvation flow. By theſe ſtreams our hearts are ſoftened into tears of compunction, and our ſouls refreſhed with new vigour in their way to Heaven.

On a ſimilar occaſion of diſcontent amongſt the people, (*Numb.* c. 20.) Moyſes repeated the ſame miracle in a place, called Cades, where Mary his ſiſter died. The mutineers at that time carried their inſolence ſo far, as to forget all reſpect for their leaders. The two brothers, ſeeing it was not only uſeleſs, but alſo dangerous to contend with a lawleſs multitude, retired into the Tabernacle, where bathed in tears and proſtrate before God in prayer, they implored the divine mercy upon a hardened people, from whoſe violence they were obliged to fly. With the earneſt tenderneſs of a father they prayed for the moſt ungrateful of men; they interceded for the preſervation of a people, who were perſecuting them for the very good, they had done them. God was pleaſed to comfort his faithful ſervants by manifeſting his glory to them, and he told Moyſes to lead out the people before the rock, where he would give them water to drink. Moyſes accordingly roſe up, aſſembled his people, and bade them follow him. He ſtood full before them, he addreſſed himſelf to the rock, as tho' it were leſs hard and leſs deaf, than they: he ſtruck it twice with his rod, and behold, a plenteous ſtream guſhed out. The people drank, and their fury was allayed with their thirſt.

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In this intereſting miracle the ſacred writer takes notice of a circumſtance, which ought not to be forgotten. Moyſes ſtruck the rock twice, by which he expreſſed a doubt of the ſubſequent event. Little as the fault may ſeem, it was moſt ſeverely puniſhed. Almighty God was offended by it, and therefore warned his ſervant out of his life, before he ſhould enter the land of promiſe. Moyſes, who on every other occaſion had been ſo faithful to his God, who had wrought ſo many and ſo glorious achievements in his ſervice; Moyſes, who had ſo often obtained pardon for the moſt atrocious ſins of his people, and in whoſe hands the plentitude of God's miraculous power ſeemed to be depoſited, was taken out of life for a fault apparently only venial. In puniſhment of ſome little diffidence, he had ſhown in the execution of God's order, Moyſes was deprived of the only happineſs, that he wiſhed to enjoy, before he died. How adorable are thy counſels, and how terrible are thy judgments, O God of Iſrael!

§ VII. *Defeat of Amelec. Exod.* 17, 18.

ENCOURAGED by this freſh inſtance of the divine goodneſs, which had given them water from the hard rock, the Iſraelites kept up their ſpirits for a time, till they ſaw themſelves attacked by a formidable enemy. The Amalecites were the firſt, who had the boldneſs to make war upon a nation, which God had viſibly taken under his protection. They imagined, that an undiſciplined multitude of men, fatigued with continual marches, ſpent with ſcarcity of proviſions, and almoſt wholly deſtitute of every implement of war, would make no great reſiſtance. Upon that cowardly preſumption they drew their forces together, and marched out to deſtroy a people, from whom they had received no provocation, and could fear no harm: Moyſes with his uſual confidence in God was reſolved to defend himſelf. Neither the numbers nor the warlike ſhow of his enemies *A. M.* 2513, *Before J. C.* 1487.

mies gave him the leaſt alarm. He called upon Joſue, and ordered him to chuſe out ſome of the moſt valiant amongſt the people, and to make head againſt the common enemy, aſſuring him at the ſame time, that he would be anſwerable for the ſucceſs. The next morning Joſue led out his troops to battle, while Moyſes with Hur and Aaron went to the top of a neighbouring mountain, that commanded the plain, to pray for the combatants. He prayed with his arms extended in the form of a croſs, which was in future times to be ſo ſalutary to us, and ſo formidable to our enemies. By that he taught the children of Iſrael in their very firſt engagement, that victory depends ſolely upon God, and that he is ready to grant it to thoſe, who with an humble confidence aſk it of him. The Iſraelites accordingly prevailed againſt the moſt vigorous efforts of Amelec, as long as Moyſes lifted up his hands to heaven in prayer for them. But when thro' fatigue he was obliged to let them fall, his people then gave way, and the Amalecites prevailed in their turn: Which when Hur and Aaron obſerved, they obliged the man of God to ſit down, and ſtanding on each ſide of him, held up his arms ſtretched out in prayer till ſunſet, when the Iſraelites put the enemy to flight, and gained a complete victory. The memory of that glorious event was by God's order, recorded to future generations, and an eternal enmity declared againſt the nation of Amelec, till it ſhould be utterly deſtroyed.

In this example as we ſee on one hand how ineffectual every human effort is of itſelf to inſure ſucceſs, ſo on the other we cannot but admire the force of holy prayer, which ſo efficaciouſly engages the hand of the Almighty to aſſiſt and ſupport us. Prayer is one of the firſt duties of a Chriſtian: it is an important, it is a public, it is an univerſal duty; a duty from which no man of whatever rank or ſtation in life can be exempt. And tho' it be a duty incumbent upon all in general, yet in a more ſpecial manner it regards thoſe, who are charged with the conduct of others. Unable of themſelves to fulfil their obligation, they muſt by fervent prayer obtain the

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divine help, which alone can ſtrengthen their weakneſs, and make them equal to the taſk. To pray for thoſe under their care is perhaps the moſt important ſervice, they can do them; prayer is a ſource of endleſs bleſſings, which are not communicated thro' any other chanel. If Moyſes had not prayed, Joſue had not been victorious. The forces of Amalec, tho' more than ſufficient to defeat the arms of a whole nation, could not ſtand againſt the prayers of Moyſes: the ſingle prayer of one man contributed more to the victory, than the united efforts of a great army.

§ VIII. *The commandments given on Mount Sinai. Exod.* 19.

THREE months were elapſed, ſince the Iſraelites had left the land of Egypt, and every day ſince that time had furniſhed ſome miraculous inſtance of the divine goodneſs towards them. God commanded Moyſes to remind them of thoſe great wonders, which he had wrought in their favour, and to declare the merciful deſigns, that he ſtill had upon them. For of all the nations of the earth he promiſed to make them his choſen people, and ſpecial inheritance for ever, upon condition, that they on their part would promiſe to be faithful in his ſervice, and keep his commandments. Moyſes in conſequence aſſembled the people, and related to them the words, he had received from the Lord for their conſent: they all with one accord immediately cried out, that they would do whatever the Lord ſhould command them. Upon that public profeſſion of their willingneſs to obey the divine precepts, he gave them notice to prepare for the third day, when they ſhould hear God himſelf ſpeaking to them from the ſummit of Mount Sinai. And that they might be worthy to appear before him, he ordered them not to approach their wives in the mean time, but to ſanctify themſelves and to waſh their garments. Around the foot of the holy mountain he drew

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a boundary, which in the name of God he charged them not to paſs under pain of death.

The third day now began to dawn: a clear light diffuſed itſelf over the earth: the ſky was open and ſerene, when behold a dark and gloomy change came on, and a ſolemn ſcene unfolded itſelf to the ſpectators. Dreadful thunders began to roll on every ſide of Mount Sinai, and quick lightnings flaſhed from the ſullen cloud, that hung over its top. The Lord deſcended in fire upon the ſteep ſummit, and called Moyſes to him. The whole circumference of the mountain was forthwith involved in thick ſmoke, and an inceſſant ſtream of flames aroſe, as from a glowing furnace. The ſhrill and ſwelling clangors of a trumpet were alſo heard at the ſame time, the people trembled, and lay cloſe within their tents. Moyſes went down to them, and with difficulty having prevailed upon them to move out, ranged them in order beyond the boundary, that he had ſet round the foot of the mountain. The Lord then ſpoke his commands, ſaying, I am the Lord, thy God; Thou ſhalt not have ſtrange Gods before me, nor make to thyſelf any graven thing: thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: remember thou keep holy the ſabbath day: honour thy father and thy mother: thou ſhalt not kill: thou ſhalt not commit adultery: thou ſhalt not ſteal: thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs againſt thy neighbour: thou ſhalt not covet thy neighbour's wife: thou ſhalt not covet thy neighbour's goods. The loud voice and preſence of the Lord, arrayed with all that pomp of awful majeſty, filled the Iſraelities with ſuch terror, that, unable to ſtand any longer, they deſired Moyſes to ſpeak, and not thus expoſe them to the danger of being terrified out of life by the tremendous language of a God.

Thus did almighty God for the firſt time publiſh his commandments in a ſolemn manner to the world. They are ten in number, and contain the ſum of all our obligations both to God and man: they will to the lateſt poſterity retain their full force, and no man ever can preſume to trangreſs them without incurring the guilt of ſin. It is the wiſh of the holy Fathers, that every Chriſtan ſhared

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a part at leaſt of that holy fear, with which the Iſraelites were at the time ſo deeply penetrated. Such a fear is the beginning of true wiſdom; it checks the paſſions, and reſtrains the heart from vice. Length of time, and a corruption of morals, firſt amongſt the Jews, and ſince amongſt Chriſtians, has almoſt worn out the ſalutary impreſſion, and left the world imperfectly ſenſible of its ſacred obligations. Self-love has ſtudied every art, and by every ſubtlety has tried to explain away the force of God's precepts, and to remove every bar, that is a check to our corrupt inclinations. But Jeſus Chriſt, who has aſſured us, that not ſo much as the leaſt tittle of his law can be altered, continues to be ſtill the ſame God, he always was, and ſtill exacts the ſame reſpectful obedience to his precepts. No length of time can preſcribe againſt their force, and no faſhions of the age can make any change in the nature of their obligations. It is not fear, it is the nobler ſentiments of love and charity, that ought to influence our obedience to the law of God. Servile fear may for a while reſtrain a ſlave from vice; it never can perfect the free-born ſons of God in Chriſtian virtue. Very different from the ſtiff-necked Iſraelites, who deſired God to ſpeak no longer, leſt their fears might kill them, a Chriſtian wiſhes to hear the voice of God himſelf: for he knows, that the words of God are the words of life, and therefore begs him ſo to accompany them with the unction of his Holy Spirit, that his yoke may be made ſweet, and his burden light.

§ IX. *The golden Calf. Exod. 32.*

IN compliance with the requeſt of a ſtiff-necked people, it pleaſed Almighty God to ſpeak no more in perſon to them, but to employ the miniſtry of Moyſes in the future orders he had to give them. For that purpoſe he called him up to the mountain, where in a private conference he imparted many freſh inſtructions to him. Theſe inſtructions are a collection of holy laws, full of *A. M.* 2513. *Before J. C.* 1487.

conſummate wiſdom, by which he regulated the religious and civil duties of his people at that time. They are comprehended under one common title of the Jewiſh or Levitical law, and are recorded at full length in the books of Moyſes. Almighty God having fully explained himſelf to his inſpired Law-giver upon every particular, delivered to him two tables of ſtone, on both ſides of which he had with his own finger, as the Scripture expreſſes it, engraved the ten commandments, as the ground-work and abridgment of all his other precepts. Forty days and as many nights were ſpent in this ſecret interview between God and Moyſes. During that time the people had, by an unaccountable hardneſs of heart, forgot not only Moyſes, but the very God, who a few weeks before had appeared ſo terrible to them on the mountain, under which they ſtill lay encamped. Not knowing, as they ſaid, what was become of Moyſes, they aſſembled round Aaron, and in a tumultuous manner inſiſted upon his letting them have an idol, like other nations, to go before them. Aaron weakly yielded to their impious demand, and ordered them to bring him a collection of gold, and golden ear-rings of their wives and daughters. He melted it down together, and formed the image of a golden Calf. Strange as it appears, this was the idol, which the Jews amidſt the applauſes of a ſhouting multitude ſet up in the camp, and adored, as the God of Iſrael. Moyſes at that very hour, by the expreſs command of God, came down from the mountain with the two tables of the Law in his hand. Struck at the unuſual ſounds he heard, he haſtened on to ſee, what the matter was; and behold, as he approached the camp, he found the people dancing and ſinging round the golden calf. Grief and indignation at the ſight kindled ſuch a flame within his breaſt, that he ſeemed in a manner to be tranſported out of himſelf: he threw down the tables from his hands, and ſhivered them to pieces; for they were needleſs to a people, who had blotted the Law itſelf out of their hearts. In the ardour of his zeal he laid hold of the idol they had made, immediately broke it down, and caſt it into the fire. As

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ſoon as he had reduced it to powder, he mixed it with water, and gave it to the Iſraelites to drink, that they might ſee, how deſpicable a thing it was, which they had fooliſhly adopted for their God. He called Aaron to a ſevere account for having ſuffered ſuch a ſcandal to be ſet up, and laſt of all addreſſed himſelf to the people in general. Having placed himſelf in the entrance of the camp, he proclaimed aloud, that all thoſe, who ſtill retained any ſenſe of their duty to God, ſhould come forth and join him. The whole tribe of Levi ranged themſelves immediately by his ſide. He turned about, and told them to unſheath their ſwords, and to march in a ſtrait line quite thro' the camp and back again, putting every one to death, that ſhould come in their way, without any diſtinction or reſpect of perſons. The faithful Levites executed the order to its full extent, and by their hands about three and twenty thouſand men were ſacrificed, to expiate the guilt of thoſe, that ſurvived.

To a cenſorious world, whoſe thoughts are confined to the reſentment of injuries done to men only, this execution may perchance ſeem ſevere. To Chriſtians, who conſider the infinite diſtance, that there is between the Creator and his creature, it occurs, how great a ſatisfaction is due to an inſulted Deity. The Levites were armed with the ſword of juſtice, and they were armed by the meek, inſpired miniſter of a God, who holds the ſovereign power of life and death over all men. The whole body of the Iſraelites had ſinned, and their ſin was grievous beyond expreſſion; a few were puniſhed, as they deſerved, that the reſt might repent and live. The conduct of Moyſes on this occaſion is an inſtructive leſſon, ſays Saint Gregory, to thoſe pliant parents, who are afraid of giving the leaſt reprimand or correction to their children; who, tho' they ſee them ſtraying from their duty, plunging into vice, and falling headlong towards the precipice of hell, yet ſuffer no uneaſineſs, no diſturbance to be given them. The zealous Levites, ſays this holy Father, had no doubt a true love for their children, tho' they ſpared them not. True parental love has its moments of ſeverity; it is forced to chaſtiſe

ſometimes even with rigour, that it may correct the faulty and ſave the delinquent. No father ever had a more tender love for his ſon, than Moyſes had for the Iſraelites; their intereſt, their life and happineſs was blended with his own. His love had duty for its foundation, and God for its motive; it was ſubſervient to the fidelity, that he owed to his Creator: his zeal for juſtice was equal to his charity. He knew how heinouſly his people had offended; he dreaded the anger of a juſt God, and was therefore zealous to prevent the conſequence by a timely ſeverity.

§ X. *The ſecond Tables of the Law.* *Exod.* 34.

A. M. 2513. *Before J. C.* 1487. MOYSES was inconſolable for the prevarication of his people. The crime of idolatry ſeemed to him too abominable to admit of an excuſe, or to leave any room for pardon. He called however the tribes together on the following day, and after having ſet forth the enormity of their guilt in the moſt expreſſive language, he told them, that notwithſtanding their ingratitude, he would preſent himſelf before God in their behalf, and endeavour to obtain their pardon for a ſin, which called aloud for puniſhment. With a heart ready to burſt with grief he retired from their preſence, proſtrated himſelf before God, as tho' he had been the only guilty one, and in the ſentiments of an humble penitent begged, that he might be blotted out of the book of life, rather than that his people ſhould not obtain forgiveneſs. A prayer ſo fervent, ſo humble, and ſo charitable, did not fail of its effect. God bade him riſe, and tell his people, that in conſideration of their fathers, Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, he would put them in poſſeſſion of the land, he had promiſed them; but that henceforward he ſhould be leſs liberal of his favours to a race of men, whoſe ſtubborneſs of heart was likely to deſerve his ſevereſt vengeance, before they reached their journey's end. When Moyſes repeated theſe laſt words to the people, they

they wept, ſeemed ſenſible of their crime, and as a mark of their repentance laid aſide their uſual ornaments of dreſs, and recovered the divine favour. Almighty God, being thus reconciled with his people, commanded Moyſes to hew out two other tables of ſtone like thoſe, he had broken, and to go with them to the top of mount Sinai, where he ſhould receive the ſame words engraven on them, as had been engraven on the firſt. In obedience to this order, Moyſes provided himſelf with two new tables, and for the ſecond time aſcended the holy mountain to converſe with God. As ſoon as he reached the top, he proſtrated himſelf in prayer, and begged the divine bleſſing upon his Iſraelites for the reſt of their journey. The Lord deſcended from the cloud, that hung over the ſummit of the mountain, heard his prayer, and promiſed him protection. He converſed familiarly with his ſervant, and gave him every inſtruction neceſſary for his own and the people's future conduct. The holy conference laſted for forty days and forty nights, during all which time Moyſes neither eat nor drank. The term being expired, he took up the two tables of ſtone, on which God had written the words of the ten commandments, and came down from the mountain, ignorant of the change, that this long converſation with God had made in his countenance: for as he approached the camp, Aaron and the reſt of the Iſraelites perceived a bright blaze of glory ſhining from his face, which made them afraid of coming near him. Being told the cauſe of their not approaching, he covered his face with a veil, which he wore ever after, except when he entered the tabernacle to converſe with God. Moyſes's conduct in this particular is a tacit admonition for us likewiſe to condeſcend to the weakneſſes of others, as far as duty will permit, and carefully to avoid the ſhow of any extraordinary gifts or talents, we may be poſſeſſed of.

Thus it was, that God received his people again into favour, and delivered to them his commandments, written for the ſecond time on two new tables of ſtone with his own hand. The ſingular favour, he then granted to the Iſraelites, is a mark of that, which he grants to all

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true penitents, when by the operation of his Holy Spirit he re-imprints in their ſouls the character of his love, which had been effaced by ſin. And it is that gratuitous grace, which no one can merit, and few obtain without great pains, and the moſt laborious endeavours. It is what is ſignified to us by the labour, which Moyſes was ordered to employ in hewing out the ſecond ſtones with his own hand; a labour, which he had not employed about the firſt, as the holy Fathers obſerve. The difficulty, that attends the purchaſe of a favour, uſually makes us more ſenſible of its value: and this very difficulty God has annexed to the recovery of his holy grace, that it may make us more careful not to loſe it a ſecond time. For ſuch is the weakneſs of our nature, that we eaſily reſign, what we can eaſily recover: and the greatneſs of a loſs is not made ſenſible to us, but by the difficulty we find in repairing it. As the renewal of the Law on ſtone was not to be effected, but by great labour joined with faſting and devout prayer, ſo neither can the loſs of grace in the ſoul be repaired, but by tears and penitential deeds.

§ XI. *The Tabernacle. Exod.* 26.

A. M. 2518. *Before J. C.* 1487. MOYSES having brought the tables of the Law to the people, and the people having promiſed a faithful obedience to it, he turned his thoughts upon the execution of thoſe ſpecial orders, which God had given him on the mountain. Before he ſet to work, he convened the tribes, and informed them of the inſtructions, he had received: he deſcribed to them the different works and ornaments, which he was commanded to prepare for the divine ſervice: he propoſed to them the expenſe, that would be requiſite for ſo great an undertaking, and hoped that each one would be ready according to his abilities to contribute towards it. They no ſooner heard the propoſal made, but they produced their moſt precious effects, their coſtly ſtuffs, their rich plate and perfumes:

fumes: the women likewiſe, unwilling to be out-done by the men, ſtript themſelves of their fineſt ornaments, their bracelets, their rings and ear-rings: in a word, the zeal of all the people on that occaſion, ſtriving to outdo one another, was ſo great, that Moyſes was preſently furniſhed with every material he wanted. He ſaw ſuch heaps of riches lying round him, that by a public crier he gave them notice to bring no more. His next concern was to look out for proper workmen, and ſkilful artiſts for the execution. The firſt thing he ſet about, was the Tabernacle, an oblong quadrangular tent, thirty cubits in length and nine in breadth. The back part and two ſides were made of Setim boards, ten cubits long, which formed the height of the edifice from the ground to the edge of the roof. Theſe boards were placed upright, mortiſed at the ſides, and at the bottom let into a baſe by two ſilver tenons at the corner of each board: they were faſtened together on the outſide with croſs pieces of Setim wood, and plated with gold. The roof was covered with a double row of died ſkins, laid one upon another, and faſtened cloſe together with loops and buckles of braſs. This covering was made long enough to hang down a whole cubit on each ſide, as a fence againſt the weather. The inſide was hung with rich embroidered tapeſtry, and was divided into two parts by four pillars of Setim, richly gilt, upon ſilver pediments, with capitals of gold. Before theſe pillars was a veil of moſt exquiſite needlework, variegated with the brighteſt colours of purple, hyacinth, and ſcarlet. The apartment, incloſed behind this veil, was called the Holy of Holies, and the ſpace between that veil and the entrance was called the Sanctuary. The entrance itſelf was ſhut up by another veil of the ſame coſtly needlework, which, like the other, hung by rings againſt the finely ornamented pillars, that formed the front of the Tabernacle, and looked to the eaſt.

Such was the myſterious ſtructure of Moyſes's portable tabernacle, which according to Saint Auſtin was a figure of the Church militant in its ſtate of pilgrimage upon earth, as the temple of Salomon was an emblem of

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its immutable ſtate of glory in Heaven. The ſolid planks, that compoſed the ſides of the Tabernacle, repreſent thoſe ſolid virtues, which have rendered the Church of Chriſt eminent for ſanctity in all ages, and the ſilver tenons, on which they ſtood, denote the truth and purity of her doctrine. The various colours and works of embroidery, which ornamented the inſide of the Tabernacle, give us an idea of the various gifts and graces, that adorn the Elect, and are at once the glory of God and ornament of his Church. But it is not one part only, nor any ſeparate perfection of its parts, it is the beauty of the whole, and the union of all its parts together, that is to be conſidered, when we ſpeak of the tabernacle of God, as the holy Fathers remark. For however excellent the virtues of particular perſons in the Church may appear, they are nothing, if not linked together by faith and charity with the reſt of the faithful, whoſe peace and concord form the moſt perfect temple, that God has upon earth.

§ XII. *The Ark of the Covenant. Exod.* 25, 26.

A. M. 2514. *Before J. C.* 1486. THE Tabernacle being finiſhed according to the model, which God himſelf had given upon the mountain, Moyſes in the ſecond place began the Ark of the Covenant. This Ark, when finiſhed, was conſidered by the Iſraelites as the moſt precious ſymbol of their religion, the glory of Iſrael according to the Scripture phraſe, and the ſtrength of the Hebrew people. It was to prepare a place ſuitable for its reception, that the Tabernacle had been firſt made. The Ark meaſured two cubits and a half in length, one and a half in breadth, which was equal to its heigth. It was made of incorruptible wood, plated with the pureſt gold both within and without. The cover or lid of the Ark was not of wood, like the reſt, but of ſolid gold, and was called the Propitiatory, or mercy-ſeat; becauſe there it was, that God heard the petitions of his people, and returned them

them his anſwers, whenever he was pleaſed to be propitious, and to ſhow mercy to them. Upon the Propitiatory ſtood two Cherubims, face to face, with their wings extended and ſpread ſo, as to cover the Ark, and formed, as it were, a throne for the God of all ſanctity and majeſty. Hence comes the expreſſion, which we often meet with in the holy Scripture, of God ſitting upon the Cherubims. At the four corners of the Ark were four golden rings, in which four levers of Setim, covered with gold, were always left for the convenience of carrying it, whenever the camp moved forward. The ark was in a ſpecial manner conſecrated to God, in which nothing was depoſited beſides the two tables of the Law: it is therefore called the Ark of teſtimony, and the Ark of the covenant, by which two names the Law itſelf is often called in holy Writ.

Thus it pleaſed Almighty God in ancient times to treat his people, and to give them a viſible object of religious veneration, proportioned to their capacity, and placed within the reach of their corporeal ſenſes. For ſome external ſign is neceſſary to rouſe our faith, to aid our weakneſs, and to fix our attention in the exerciſe of divine worſhip. The Propitiatory, which covered the Ark, was a type or figure of Jeſus Chriſt, who according to Saint Paul, is our propitiation, and the mediator of peace between his heavenly Father and us. Thro' him alone we obtain the remiſſion of our ſins, and from him we receive the oracles of ſalvation, when we hear him ſpeaking by the mouth of thoſe, whom he has commiſſioned to teach, and commanded us to hear. For to his Church he ſays, He that hears you, hears me. The Propitiatory had its Cherubims, and ſo has Jeſus Chriſt in his followers. Chriſtians themſelves, as Saint Auſtin often repeats, are theſe Cherubims, who by their ardent charity are transformed, as it were, into the living ſeats and thrones of God. The honour, to which we are raiſed by the ſacrament of baptiſm, being ſo eminently great, we cannot ſtoop to the pomps of ſin, without degrading our Chriſtian character: being once formed into the living temples of the Holy Ghoſt, we cannot

without ſacrilege admit any other object of adoration within our hearts. The Philiſtines indeed ſet up the Ark and Dagon in the ſame temple; and it is what every Chriſtian does, ſays Saint Auſtin, who endeavours to unite God and the world together, who divides his ſervice between Jeſus Chriſt and Satan.

§ XIII. *The Table of Show-bread. Exod.* 25.

A. M. 2514, *Before J. C.* 1486. THE Ark of the Covenant being finiſhed, Moyſes gave directions for making a table, according to the model, God had ſhown him. It was made of the incorruptible wood Setim, plated on the top, and edged round with the pureſt gold, being a cubit and a half high, two cubits long, and one broad. Above the edge was a rich border of fret-work, four fingers high, with a ſmall gilt rim round the top. To each foot, juſt under the four corners, were four golden rings to receive the bars, that were made of Setim, and covered with gold, for the decent convenience of carrying the table, when ever it was to be moved. It always ſtood in the Sanctuary on the north ſide over againſt the golden candleſtick; and on it were ſet the twelve loaves of Show bread, ſo called, becauſe they were placed in open view, before the Ark of the Lord. They were ſet ſix and ſix, one upon another, in two heaps, one at each end of the table: they remained there for a whole week, when they were replaced by twelve freſh ones, made like them, of the fineſt flower tempered with oil. Upon the uppermoſt loaf of each heap ſtood a veſſel ſmoking with the ſweeteſt incenſe. The ſtale bread at the week's end was according to God's order eaten by the Prieſts within the Sanctuary; nor was it lawful for any other perſon to eat thereof.

This offering of the Show-bread, according to the remark made by the holy Fathers, was a continual ſacrifice, by which the children of Iſrael expreſſed their gratitude, and acknowledged their dependence on God for the bleſſings they enjoyed. The number of loaves was equal

equal to the number of tribes, that each tribe might ſhare in that public act of thankſgiving, which was ſo juſtly due to the common Father of them all. The like acts of gratitude are not leſs pleaſing to God now, than they were then; and with far greater reaſon does he now expect a more grateful return, as the bleſſings which he has ſince ſhowered down upon us Chriſtians, are infinitely more precious. Amongſt the many ſpiritual bleſſings, which are peculiar to us, and were not granted to the carnal Jews, we have received a more excellent kind of Show-bread, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf in the holy Euchariſt. This is the heavenly and living Bread, which is daily offered in the Chriſtian Church to Almighty God, in thankſgiving for all his benefits both ſpiritual and temporal; and for this reaſon it is ſpecified by the name of the Holy Euchariſt. It not only is the tribute of thankſgiving, which we pay to God, it alſo is the pledge of God's ſpecial love to us, and a ſtanding memorial of all his other wonders. The participation of this heavenly Bread is not now a days reſtrained to Prieſts only, it is extended to all and each of the faithful, that being animated with the ſame ſpirit, and nouriſhed with the ſame divine food, we may all live, and form one body in Chriſt Jeſus.

§ XIV. *The golden Candleſtick. Exod.* 25.

OF all the magnificent ornaments and ſacred utenſils, which God commanded Moyſes to make for the divine ſervice, the golden candleſtick for its workmanſhip ſeems to have been the chief. It was made according to the pattern, which God himſelf had drawn, and ſhown to Moyſes upon the mountain. Six branches, three and three on each ſide, ſpread themſelves out in a curve from the pedeſtal, which was carried up in a ſtrait line, and formed a ſeventh branch in the middle. The ſtem of each branch was ornamented with knobs, in the form of a nut at equal diſtances, and thoſe diſtan-

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ces were filled up with leaves and cups of flowers richly wrought and moſt exquiſitely finiſhed. Upon theſe ſeven branches were hung ſeven lamps of maſſive gold, which were fed with the ſweeteſt oil of olives, and lighted up every day by the High-prieſt himſelf to burn during the night. The candleſtick with all its ornaments weighed a whole talent of the pureſt gold, which by computation is conſiderably more than three thouſand pounds ſterling. The ſeven myſterious lamps ſeem to have ſome reference to a paſſage we meet with in the Revelations, where Jeſus Chriſt after his aſcenſion is repreſented with ſeven ſtars in his hand in the midſt of ſeven candleſticks, which he expreſsly ſays are ſeven churches with their reſpective prelates. Of his miniſters in the new law our bleſſed Saviour ſays, that he has kindled them up as lamps to ſhine in the houſe of God. Theſe living lamps muſt not only burn, they muſt alſo ſhine, as he teſtifies of his Baptiſt; the bright example of good works, which ſhine forth in the conduct of every zealous paſtor and of every good Chriſtian, receives its intrinſic luſtre from the fire of charity, which burns within his heart. The flame of divine love, which has been once kindled in a devout ſoul, muſt be diligently attended to, leſt it chance to be dampt by worldly communications, and at laſt extinguiſhed by growing paſſions. Saint Gregory takes notice of the ſolid maſſiveneſs, that compoſed the golden candleſtick, and thinks it expreſſive of that ſteady firmneſs, which ought to diſtinguiſh every true Chriſtian in the diſcharge of his duty to God and man. He moreover obſerves at the ſame time, that this fortitude of mind muſt come from Chriſt, who is the ſtock, that ſupports the branches, and imparts life and vigour to them all. The ſeveral members of the Church have nothing to fear as long, as they remain united to Jeſus Chriſt, ſays the ſame holy Doctor. Men may work up ſtorms, and ſtrive by boiſterous efforts to ſhake their conſtancy; God, who is in the midſt of them, will continue to help them by his grace, and ſave them by his power. Under his protection they ſtand ſecure in the midſt of trials; they may be oppreſſed, but cannot be overcome: if

if in his cauſe and for his ſake they fall a ſacrifice to perſecuting violence, they fall to riſe again, they glorioufly exchange a mortal life for an eternal one.

§ XV. *The Altar of perfumes. Exod.* 30.

TO complete the furniture, that God had ordered for his Tabernacle, Moyſes made an altar, which was called the altar of perfumes, becauſe upon it was daily offered the morning and evening ſacrifice of ſweet-ſcented gums and ſpices, mixed together according to God's own direction. This altar was of a quadrangular form, made of the wood Setim, and covered on every part with plates of gold: it was two cubits high, one broad, & one long: it ſtood between the golden candleſtick and the table of ſhow-bread, full againſt the veil, that divided the Holy of Holies from the Sanctuary. Round the tabernacle lay a large court, incloſed with pillars five cubits aſunder, finely carved and ornamented with braſs pedeſtals and ſilver capitals: coſtly hangings covered the four ſides of the incloſure, which was extended a hundred cubits in length, and fifty in breadth: in that breadth of the court, which looked towards the Eaſt, there was an entrance twenty cubits wide, hung with rich embroidered work of fine twiſted linnen, of violet, and purple and ſcarlet twice died. Within the court in the open air and oppoſite to the door, that opened into the Sanctuary, Moyſes placed a great altar, for the burnt offerings, which he called the altar of holocauſts. It was a ſquare figure made of Setim, three cubits high, five long, and as many broad. Thick plates of braſs covered it on every ſide; a grate of net-work lay along the top, under the middle of which was the hearth a cubit and a half in dimenſion. The altar was hollow within, that it might be carried the more eaſily, whenever the camp moved from one ſtation to another. *A. M.* 2514, *Before J. C.* 1486.

This was the ſtructure of the two altars, which according to Saint Gregory, repreſent the two different claſſes of

of men, that the Church embraces within her pale, the innocent and the penitent. The altar of holocauſts ſtood in the open court, and repreſented the ſtate of a ſinner, who is not worthy to be re-admitted within the Sanctuary, till by a hearty ſorrow joined to external works of penance he has mortified his fleſh, and rendered himſelf a ſacrifice acceptable to God. The altar of perfumes was placed within the Sanctuary, and indicated the privilege of thoſe happy ſouls, who for their innocence are always united to their Creator. Their charity ſhines like the gold, which covered that altar, while their morning and evening prayers aſcend like incenſe to the clouds. In the fervour of devotion they pour forth their ſouls to God, and offer him the pureſt homage of their love, whilſt the penitent make him an humble offering of their tears, and ſigh at the ſad remembrance of their paſt offences. Thus one of theſe altars is for thoſe, whoſe conſciences are ſtill bleeding with the wounds of ſin; the other is for thoſe, who have their affections fixed on Heaven, and breathe after the enjoyment of their God. The Prieſt prepares the firſt, when he ſtrongly repreſents to ſinners the faults, they have committed, and exhorts them to repent; he prepares the ſecond, when after the ſacrifice of compunction is fulfilled, he leads thoſe humble penitents into the temple of our Lord, where their tears, that lately ſprung from ſorrow and regret, now more ſweetly flow from a principle of gratitude and holy love. But tho' theſe altars ſo much differ one from the other, yet in this they agree, that by them both religious honour is paid to God, and that on them both the fire of the Holy Ghoſt is requiſite to render the ſacrifice acceptable.

§ XVI. *Veſtments of the Prieſts. Exod.* 28.

A. M. 2514, *Before J. C.* 1486. BESIDES the principal ornaments already mentioned, there was a vaſt variety of other rich furniture prepared for the uſe of the Tabernacle, ſuch as ſaucers, phials,

phials, cenſers, and goblets of the pureſt gold. To inſpire reſpect and add dignity to the ſacerdotal functions, the Prieſts had their ſacred veſtments made by divine appointment. Part of theſe veſtments were common to the whole order of Prieſts, and part peculiar to the High-prieſt only. That part of the dreſs, which was common to them all, conſiſted of a mitre, of a cloſe linnen tunic, and a variegated girdle, that went twice round the body, and hung down to the ground at both ends. The veſtments peculiar to the High-prieſt were a large blue robe, the Ephod with its girdle, the pectoral, and rich mitre. The blue robe was put on over the white linnen tunic, and reached down to the ankles; the bottom of it was ſkirted round with pomegranates and little bells of gold, that hung alternately intermixed one with another to the number of ſeventy-two. Next came the Ephod, which was of a very rich coloured ſtuff embroidered with gold. It reached but half way down, was cloſe on both ſides, with an opening on the top for the head and neck. It was held together over the ſhoulders by two claſps, ornamented with two precious ſtones of onyx, one upon each ſhoulder; upon theſe ſtones were engraven the names of the twelve tribes, ſix upon one, and ſix upon the other. In the fore part of the Ephod, correſponding to the breaſt, was an open ſpace of about a foot ſquare, which was filled up by a rich piece of embroidery, called the Pectoral; it was ſet with twelve precious ſtones, on each of which was written the name of one of the twelve tribes of Iſrael; the two words Urim and Thummim, that is, Doctrine and Truth, were there alſo written upon a thin plate of gold. To faſten the pectoral, there were four golden chains, one at each corner, that hooked it to the Ephod. The Ephod, tho' tightly fitted to the body, was tied round with an embroidered girdle. Upon the mitre, which was made of twiſted ſilk, was fixed a thin plate of gold acroſs the forehead, on which were ſeen theſe words: Sacred to the Lord, Sanctum Domino.

The holy Fathers confine not their view to the outward richneſs, that ſhone in the ſacerdotal veſtments, they ſearch into, and ſtrive to diſcover the myſtical mean-

ing, that lay concealed within. The brilliancy of the gold, ſays Saint Gregory, was an emblem of thoſe bright virtues, which God requires in them, who approach his holy altar; virtues, that may render them as pleaſing in the divine ſight, as their rich robes exhibit them to the eyes of men. The bells round the bottom of the blue robe were as a perpetual admonition to the Prieſt, that in his conduct of life he ought to take no ſtep, but what tended to the glory of God, and the ſanctification of his people. The bells returned no ſound, unleſs he moved; a miniſter of God no longer edifies his flock, when he once ceaſes to move on in the way of virtue. The legend on the Pectoral pointed out to him, who wore it, the ſubject, on which his thoughts and words were to be employed. The twelve names of the Patriarchs engraven on the twelve ſtones, reminded him of the illuſtrious chiefs of his nation, and naturally excited him to emulate thoſe greater virtues, which had diſtinguiſhed them in the divine ſervice. For nothing has a more powerful influence upon a generous mind, than the example of thoſe perſonages, who by their actions have traced out the way to true greatneſs, and merited a place amongſt the moſt eminent of God's ſervants.

§ XVII. *Nadab and Abiu. Lev.* 10.

A. M. 2514. *Before J. C.* 1486. ALL things belonging to the Tabernacle being finiſhed, Moyſes ordered the different parts to be put together. The Tabernacle was therefore ſet up and ſolemnly dedicated in the beginning of the ſecond year after the deliverance of Iſrael from the land of Egypt. By the moſt unqueſtionable ſigns Almighty God expreſſed his approbation of the manner, in which his orders had been executed: an awful cloud hung over and covered the Tabernacle, as a token of the divine majeſty, that reſided within. This cloud continued in the ſame poſition, as long as the Tabernacle reſted in the ſame place, and only ſhifted, when the camp was in motion. Thus it

it was, that a regular form of worſhip was firſt ſet on foot; thus the God of heaven and earth began to be honoured by the ſacrifices, which he himſelf ordained. Aaron and his ſons were conſecrated Prieſts, and appointed to officiate in the ſacred miniſtry, to which God had called them. Every thing relating to the exerciſe of their holy functions was minutely penned down by Moyſes, and God exacted from them the niceſt obſervance of each religious ceremony. Amongſt other things it was ordained, that the Prieſts ſhould morning and evening add freſh fewel to the fire, that was to be kept conſtantly alive upon the altar. From that fire, which was accounted holy, the cenſers were to be filled with glowing coals for the ſacrifice of incenſe. Nadab and Abiu, the two eldeſt ſons of Aaron, had neglected that duty: on a certain occaſion they filled their cenſers with unhallowed fire, and their neglect was followed by an exemplary puniſhment: during the time of incenſe they both dropt down dead before the altar. A ſudden flaſh, like lightning, darted from the hand of God, pierced into their very vitals, and without leaving any external mark either upon their clothes or bodies, conſumed their entrails. Moyſes ordered the dead bodies, dreſt as they were, to be carried immediately away from the Sanctuary, and thrown outſide the camp, forbidding Aaron or any of his ſons to mourn for the deceaſed. He addreſſed himſelf on that occaſion to the other Prieſts, whom he deſired to take warning from what they ſaw: he bade them remember the holy unction they had received at their conſecration, and how attentive they ought to be in the performance of their ſacerdotal functions.

By an example ſo viſible and ſo terrible God has been pleaſed to ſignify, that the moſt religious honours, we can pay him, are not acceptable, unleſs accompanied with the conditions he requires. So adorable is he in his nature, that we cannot worthily honour him, but in the very manner, that he has preſcribed. Tho' a neglect of his holy ordinances may not now a days be ſo viſibly chaſtiſed, yet it ſtill is no leſs a ſubject of his diſpleaſure. With the ſame diſcerning eye he views the

hearts and hands of thoſe, who approach his altar, and ſees with what fire their affections are inkindled. There is a fire, ſays Saint Gregory, very different from that, which Jeſus Chriſt came to kindle upon earth: a fire, which is raiſed in the hearts of many by the love of creatures, and nouriſhed by the deſire of earthly enjoyments. From the example of Nadab and Abiu he takes occaſion to exhort the faithful in general, to baniſh from their hearts whatever is incompatible with the love of God. In the narrow heart of man God never can admit a rival of his love: no man can ſerve two maſters; he cannot divide his heart between God and the world.

§ XVIII. *The blaſphemer ſtoned. Lev.* 24.

A. M. 2514, *Before J. C.* 1486. THE inſtance, that God exhibited of his juſtice in the puniſhment of Nadab and Abiu, was ſoon after followed by another of equal ſeverity in the death of a blaſphemer. Two of the common people had a quarrel with each other, and one of them in the tranſport of his anger blaſphemed the ſacred name of God. The by-ſtanders were ſhocked to hear ſuch language, and led the offender ſtreight to Moyſes. Moyſes judged the matter to be of too important a nature for him to decide upon the ſpot. He conſulted God in holy prayer to know, how to act in this matter. Lead the blaſphemer out of the camp, ſaid Almighty God; let all thoſe who heard him, lay their hands upon his head, and the reſt of the people then ſtone him to death. The order was immediately executed with a ſeverity, which ought to make thoſe Chriſtians tremble, who either ſpeak or ſuffer the ſame impious language. A general law was then made, which condemned every blaſphemer to the like puniſhment. Examples of ſuch ſeverity ſeemed neceſſary to keep that ſtiff-necked people within due bounds, and to make them ſenſible of their duty to God. The like ſentence was ſoon after paſſed againſt a man, who had gathered a few ſticks upon the Sabbath-day. (*Num.* 15.)

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The action, no doubt, was ſervile, and as ſuch forbidden by the commandment; but neither Moyſes nor Aaron would determine, whether it were a capital fault or not, or what puniſhment it might deſerve, till by prayer they had learnt from God, what was to be done. God told them, to have the man led out of the camp, and there ſtoned to death.

If the like ſeverity of civil and religious diſcipline were ſtill kept up, men would be more cautious how they offended. The fear of preſent puniſhment, tho' it did not inſpire them with a love of God's law, might at leaſt hold them back from daring to offend in public. To thoſe, who join the practice to the knowledge of their duty, it is a ſubject of the deepeſt concern, to ſee the ſacred laws of God notoriouſly tranſgreſſed without ſhame or fear to the impious offender. With the eyes of faith they penetrate into the fathomleſs depth of eternity, and there behold thoſe endleſs pains, which are more to be dreaded, than any thing we can ſuffer in this life. With aking hearts they lament the blindneſs of thouſands, who run laughing on towards the fiery pit, that is always open to receive the falling ſinner. However ſlow God may ſeem to puniſh during life, he ſtill is juſt and immutable in his decrees. Death ſhall no ſooner cloſe the impenitent ſinner's eyes, but he muſt carry with him all his ſins before the tribunal of a Judge, who in the end will do himſelf juſtice for his long-injured mercy. To his coſt the ſinner ſhall then find, that no worldly ſyſtem, no laws of men can prevail againſt the law of God, nor human conſiderations juſtify a breach of the divine precepts. What God has once written, ſhall ſtand recorded to the end of time. The heavens may paſs away like ſmoke, the earth may crumble into its firſt nothing; but the law of God ſhall never vary, its obligations ſhall never ceaſe to bind the conſciences of men.

§ XIX.

§ XIX. *The twelve Spies. Num.* 12, 13.

A. M. 2514, *Before J. C.* 1486. NOTWITHSTANDING the ſeverity of theſe examples, it was with the utmoſt difficulty, that the people were reſtrained within any bounds of duty. They ſtill murmured and complained of hardſhips, which they had to ſtruggle with; even Aaron and his ſiſter were not exempt from guilt: for being jealous of their brother's authority, they were bold enough to ſay, that Moyſes was not the only one, whom God had ſpoken to; that the Lord had likewiſe communicated himſelf to them; and to palliate their conduct againſt the holy man, they objected as a crime the marriage, he had contracted with a Madianite, the daughter of Jethro. Moyſes on that trying occaſion behaved with his uſual meekneſs, and ſaid nothing. Almighty God undertook the defence of his ſervant, and by a viſible miracle made the two murmurers ſenſible of their ſin. Aaron acknowledged his fault, and eſcaped puniſhment: Mary was ſtruck with a ſudden leproſy, which covered her from head to foot. This is the Mary, who had formerly concurred in ſaving her little brother from the Nile. Moyſes interceded to God for her pardon, and received for anſwer, that ſhe ſhould be ſeparated from the people, and perform a ſeven days penance in a ſtate of excommunication from the camp.

The minds of the people were ſtill very far from being quieted; the ſpirit of ſedition ſpread amongſt them, and became almoſt general. The camp was removed from the deſert of Sinai to Pharan. From thence, by the command of God, Moyſes ſent twelve ſpies, one out of every tribe, to reconnoitre the land of Chanaan, which was at no great diſtance. The meſſengers at their return gave a moſt flattering account of the beauty and fertility of the land, they had ſeen, and as a proof produced a huge bunch of grapes and other rich fruits thereof: but at the ſame time they gave ſo frightful an account of its inhabitants and fortified towns, that the hearts of the hearers were ſtruck with a ſudden panic, which

which filled the camp with tumult and confuſion. The people mutinied againſt their leaders, they declared they would ſooner die in the deſert, than follow Moyſes any farther, and began to deliberate upon the choice, they ſhould make, of ſome other chief to conduct them back to Egypt. Their hopes of the promiſed land, which had hitherto encouraged them, ſeemed to be no more, and the power of God, which had ſo miraculouſly preſerved them, was entirely forgot. Moyſes and Aaron had no reſource but in the Lord: they were under the greateſt apprehenſions for their people; they dreaded the conſequences of God's wrath, which they expected every hour to ſee fall upon a rebellious race, and therefore prayed moſt earneſtly to avert the ſtroke. In the mean time Joſue and Caleb, two of the twelve ſpies, exerted their utmoſt endeavours to quiet the people, and to convince them of the unreaſonableneſs of their fears. They went from tribe to tribe, and aſſured them, that under the protection of a God, who had ſhown himſelf always ready to ſupport them, they had nothing to apprehend, and that no enemy, however formidable in appearance, would be able to ſtand againſt them. The people anſwered them with loud clamours of indignation, being ſeemingly determined to ſtone them to death, when God himſelf ſuddenly interpoſed, and over the roof of the Tabernacle his glory appeared viſible to all the children of Iſrael. Go, tell the incredulous people, ſaid the Lord to his faithful ſervant Moyſes, that I have heard their clamours; that I will treat them, as they deſire; that they ſhall die in the deſert; that of them all, who have attained the twentieth year of their age, not one, except Joſue and Caleb, ſhall ever reach the land, which ſo diſpleaſes them; that for full forty years they ſhall wander up and down the wilderneſs, and there die, before their children ſhall be permitted to enter into the promiſed land. The people were moved at this declaration, they wept, and promiſed obedience. The ten ſeditious ſpies, who had been the firſt inſtigators of that popular tumult, were ſtruck ſuddenly dead before

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the Lord, and Moyſes the next day marched the people back towards the red ſea.

From this conduct of the Hebrew people we ſee, how ſhameful and how dangerous a thing it is to let ourſelves be dejected at difficulties, which are either imagined or magnified by fear. Difficulties will unavoidably occur in the way of virtue; let them not ſtartle us, let us only ſtrive, and by the divine aid we ſhall happily ſurmount them. There is no entering into the land of promiſe, but by conquering the enemies, that ſtand in our way. So far from being diſheartened at the ſight of hardſhips, we ought rather to rely more confidently upon God, who promiſes never to abandon thoſe, that put their truſt in him. In the law of grace, Jeſus Chriſt promiſes his kingdom to thoſe only, who with pious violence ſhall ſtrive to gain it. Not to ſtrive, is to give up the crown; the crown is not to be won, but by vigorous conteſt, and the conteſt is not above our ſtrength. Aided by the grace of God, we not only can ſurmount every difficulty, we meet with, but we alſo add a new luſtre to our crown by every effort, we make to gain it.

§ XX. *Core, Dathan, and Abiron. Num.* 16.

A. M. 2514, *Before J. C.* 1486. THE diſturbance, cauſed by the ten ſpies, was ſoon after followed by another of a much more pernicious tendency, as it was formed by ſome of the leading men in the council, and aimed at nothing leſs than anarchy and ſchiſm. Core the great grandſon of Levi, Dathan and Abiron of the tribe of Ruben, with two hundred and fifty more chiefs of the Iſraelites, roſe in rebellion againſt Moyſes and Aaron. Being miſled by the paſſion of jealouſy and ambition, they claimed a ſhare of the ſupreme power, which they were determined to wreſt out of the hands of the two brothers. They made no ſecret of their deſign; they publicly avowed it, and before an aſſembly of the people began to call Moyſes and Aaron to an account, as if they had uſurped to themſelves an authority, which

which was injurious to the rights of the holy people of God. Aſtoniſhed at their boldneſs, Moyſes fell proſtrate upon the ground, and implored the divine protection; then riſing up he addreſſed himſelf to the multitude in general, and told them, that on the morrow it ſhould viſibly appear, whom the Lord had choſen. To Core and his Levitical adherents he ſpoke more particularly, and reproached them for their audacious ambition: Hear, ye ſons of Levi, ſaid he; does it ſeem to you but a trivial honour, that the God of Iſrael has done you in ſelecting your tribe from the reſt to ſerve him in the miniſtry of his holy tabernacle? Muſt you therefore aſſume to yourſelves the Prieſthood too? If Aaron has been preferred, was it not by the Lord's command, that he has been anointed, and why do you murmur againſt him? Let each one take his cenſer in his hand, and come thou, Core, with all thy aſſociates with thee, before the tabernacle to-morrow morning, and the Lord himſelf ſhall ſhow, whom he has choſen. They accordingly appeared, Aaron on one ſide, and Core with his adherents on the other. At that moment alſo appeared the God of majeſty in full glory, and commanded his faithful ſervants to ſeparate the ſchiſmatics from the reſt of the people. It was done: Core, Dathan, and Abiron, with their wives and children, ſtood at the entrance of their own pavilions apart. Moyſes then called the Iſraelites to witneſs, that he had in all things acted under the ſpecial direction of Almighty God, and that his very enemies, by being ſwallowed up alive in the earth, ſhould be his vouchers for the truth. Scarce had he finiſhed ſpeaking, when the earth opened, and ſwallowed up the three factious leaders, with their tents and all their ſubſtance. They deſcended alive into Hell, ſays the ſacred text; their bodies were inwrapped within the bowels of the earth, and they miſerably periſhed from amongſt the people. Their doleful cries terrified thoſe, that were ſtanding round, and made them fly for fear of being ſwallowed up in like manner. Fire at the ſame time came forth from the Lord, and deſtroyed the two hundred and fifty men, that had preſumed to offer incenſe

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upon which Almighty God thus ſpoke to Moyſes: Tell Eleazar, the ſon of Aaron the prieſt, to take the cenſers out of the fire, becauſe they are ſanctified by the incenſe, which hath been offered in them to the Lord; let him beat them into plates, and faſten them to the Altar, that they may there remain as a laſting monument to the children of Iſrael; leſt ſome other ſtranger, who is not of the ſeed of Aaron, may hereafter preſume, like Core, to exerciſe the functions of the Prieſthood. This exemplary puniſhment, one would think, ought to have awed the people into a ſenſe of their duty; but ſo hardened were they grown, that on the very next day they accuſed Moyſes and Aaron, as guilty of the death of their fellow citizens. God was grievouſly offended at their perverſeneſs, and threatened to deſtroy them all by fire. Kindled by the breath of his divine anger, the fire began to rage amongſt them: Moyſes haſtened to the Tabernacle, and in fervent prayer ſtrove to obtain their pardon. Fourteen thouſand ſeven hundred of the common people had already fallen victims to the ſpreading flames, when he bade Aaron fill his cenſer with burning coals from the Altar, and offer incenſe to the Lord. Aaron immediately went, and placing himſelf before the flames between the living and the dead, offered up his prayers with the ſmoking frankincenſe. The flames that inſtant ceaſed, and God was pacified.

To prove the divine appointment of Aaron and his ſons to the Prieſthood ſtill more deciſively, God commanded Moyſes to take twelve rods, beſides that of Aaron, and to write upon each rod the name of the leader of each tribe, and to lay them in the Tabernacle before the Ark, where the rod of that chief ſhould bloſſom, whom he had choſen for the Prieſthood. Moyſes communicated theſe orders to the people, and received a rod from the chief of each tribe, twelve in number, beſides Aaron's for the tribe of Levi, which he marked and carried into the tabernacle, where he left them all night. Upon his entering the tabernacle next morning he found the rod of Aaron not only teeming with buds and bloſſoms, but alſo ſhining with leaves and fruit.

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The other twelve rods were as dry, as when they were first put in. Moyſes brought them forth to public view, the fact was evident, Aaron's prieſthood and prerogative was eſtabliſhed beyond the poſſibility of a doubt. The rod was carried back and depoſited in the Tabernacle, as a mark for the rebellious Iſraelites to put a ſtop to their complaints.

So miraculous an interpoſition of the divine power in ſupport of the Prieſthood, moſt undoubtedly ſhows its origin, and ſtamps a ſanctity upon its character. The honour of being by divine appointment ſelected from among men to be employed in thoſe things, which immediately concern the worſhip of God, and to officiate at his altar, more eſpecially in the law of grace, is ſo ſacred, that none ſhould dare to meddle, none thruſt themſelves in, who are not appointed. The dreadful puniſhment inflicted upon Core, Dathan, and Abiron, for having taken the cenſer into their hands, and attempted the exerciſe of a function, that did not belong to them, is a warning for all to be upon their guard, how they treſpaſs upon the rights, or diſreſpect the ſanctity of God's altar.

§ XXI. *The brazen Serpent. Num.* 21.

NOTWITHSTANDING the ſtupendous miracles, which God had wrought for the encouragement of his people in their duty, and notwithſtanding the ſevere inſtances, he had given of his anger to deter them from ſin, the Iſraelites remained ſtill as ſtubborn, ſtill as perverſe as ever. Neither promiſes nor threats, neither favours nor puniſhments ſeem to have had any effect upon their hardened hearts. Tired with their long and tedious journeys in the deſert, they grew impatient of ſubordination; they conſpired againſt their leaders, they publicly arraigned their conduct, and threw out complaints againſt God himſelf: they complained, as they had often done before, for having been forced out of *A. M.* 2552, *Before J. C.* 1448.

Egypt; why were we not permitted to remain there, ſaid they? why have we been dragged out to die in this barren wilderneſs? We have not bread to eat; we are often periſhing for want of water to drink; our ſtomachs turn at the very ſight of this inſipid manna. Such complaints deſervedly drew upon them the ſevereſt puniſhments. God ſent amongſt them a number of venemous ſerpents, whoſe bite cauſed a burning pain, like that of fire. Numbers of the people died: the ſurvivors were terrified by the ſufferings and groans of their dying brethren, and became ſenſible of their offence. Their murmurs were changed into ſighs, and their clamours into acts of ſupplication. They went like humble ſupplicants to Moyſes, confeſſed their crime, and with all the ſhow of repentance beſought him to give them relief. Moved by the tears of a ſuffering people in diſtreſs, Moyſes undertook to intercede for them, and by his prayers obtained their pardon. As a token of their faith, God commanded him to ſet up the brazen figure of a ſerpent, ſo that the people might ſee it, and by looking at it be healed of the bites, they received. The mortality ceaſed, and the people were mercifully freed from an evil, which by their ſinful murmurs they had drawn upon themſelves.

The holy Fathers point out the ſpirit of murmuring and diſcontentedneſs, as one of the moſt dangerous temptations, that can happen even to the moſt perfect. If not rouſed by faith, and ſtrengthened by hope, weak nature is frequently inclined to complain in time of trial. Such complaints ariſe from a dejection of mind and ſecret diffidence in God, with which the infernal ſerpent ſtings and poiſons our ſouls. Jeſus Chriſt upon the croſs, prefigured by the brazen ſerpent in the deſert, is the object we then muſt turn to; on Him, who is the true reſtorer of our health, we muſt fix our eyes. Jeſus Chriſt in the agonies of death, ſtretched out in pain, and nailed to a croſs, uttered no complaint; his ſufferings were extreme; he ſuffered not for himſelf, but for us. Shall we then refuſe to ſuffer for him? or ſhall we dare to murmur at the ſufferings we meet with in his ſervice? Suf-

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ſer what we will, our ſufferings are but light in compariſon of his, they are not equal to what our ſins deſerve. Sufferings borne with patience ſatisfy for ſin, and add new gems to the crown of glory, which God has prepared for thoſe, who perſevere to the end in his ſervice.

§ XXII. *Balaam the ſoothſayer. Num. 22.*

THE Iſraelites were drawing towards the borders of the promiſed land; they had paſſed the wilderneſs, and entered into the inhabited country, that lies ſtretched along the eaſtern bank of the river Jordan. They had ſent deputies to Sehon king of the Amorrhites, for leave to march peaceably thro' his territories: Sehon put himſelf at the head of his army to oppoſe their paſſage, and the king of Baſan followed his example. Encouraged by a promiſe of victory from God, the Iſraelites attacked, defeated, and ſlew the two kings with their people, and poſſeſſed themſelves of the whole country; then marched on with the hopes of new conqueſts, and encamped in the plains of Moab oppoſite to Jericho. Balac king of the Moabites, ſeeing what had happened to Og and Sehon, ſent for Balaam, a falſe and famous prophet of the country, to come and lay his curſe upon an enemy, whom no human power ſeemed ſtrong enough to reſiſt. Baalam told the king's meſſengers, that he could give them no anſwer before morning: in the night he was forewarned from Heaven not to curſe a people, whom God had bleſſed, and therefore bade the meſſengers return to Balac, as they came. Balac would not be refuſed; he ſent a more ſolemn deputation of his nobles with larger preſents to Balaam. The old wizard began to ſtagger in his reſolution: the honour of being thus courted by the king flattered his vanity; the preſents were tempting; he viewed them with a covetous eye, and as if God, like him, had been capable of being bribed into other ſentiments by force of gold, he conſulted him again. God, in puniſhment of his impiety and *A. M.* 2553, *Before J. C.* 1447.

avarice, abandoned him to the ſecret deſires of his own corrupt heart, and bade him go with the meſſengers to Balac. Balaam roſe betimes next morning, ſaddled his aſs, and accompanied the king's ſervants. As he was going on, the aſs ſuddenly turned aſide to avoid an Angel, that ſtood in the way with a drawn ſword, and ran out into the field. Balaam not knowing what the beaſt had ſtarted at, for he did not ſee the Angel, gave her hard blows to bring her back into the road. The Angel then placed himſelf in a narrow paſs between two dead walls, where to avoid him the aſs thruſt herſelf cloſe on one ſide, and hurt the rider's foot againſt the wall, for which ſhe was cruelly beaten a ſecond time. She after that ſaw the ſame Angel ſtanding in a place, where it was impoſſible to paſs him: ſhe fell with fright under the feet of the rider, who in a tranſport of anger beat her ſides more vehemently with his ſtaff. Then by a ſingular miracle of the kind did God open the mouth of the dumb animal, to complain of the cruel treatment. Balaam's eyes were opened, and ſeeing the Angel with a drawn ſword ready to kill him, threw himſelf upon the ground, confeſſed his fault, and offered to return home, if ſuch was the Angel's will. The Angel told him he might go on, but to take care how he uttered any thing contrary to his orders. Balac, being informed of Balaam's approach, went forth to meet and conduct him to the high places of Baal. Seven altars were erected and the victims ſlain. Balaam told the king that he could ſpeak no otherwiſe, than as God commanded him; and in ſpite of all the king could ſay or promiſe him, he perſiſted in declaring he could pronounce nothing, but bleſſings and happy tidings for Iſrael. The fear however of loſing the king's bounty, induced him to adviſe a meaſure, which he thought would defeat the bleſſings he had pronounced. His advice was to make the Iſraelites acquainted with the women of Madian, not doubting but by forming a connection with them they would adore their idols, and ſo forfeit the favour and protection of the God of Abraham. This advice was followed, and attended with the worſt of conſequences: for the idola-

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trous women of Madian, having gained the affections of the carnal Jews, ſeduced them from their duty into the moſt criminal engagements. Moyſes wept to ſee the Iſraelites abandon themſelves to the ſuperſtitious rites of Beelphegor, uſed his ſtrenuous endeavours to reclaim them, and by the command of God, puniſhed many of the offenders with death. Phinees, the zealous grandſon of Aaron, diſtinguiſhed himſelf on that occaſion, and by one vigorous ſtroke put a ſtop to an evil, which ſeemed to threaten ruin to God's choſen people.

Thus by the zealous efforts of one true Levite, ſays Saint Ambroſe, the children of Iſrael were ſaved from the precipice, which the avarice of a falſe prophet had prepared for them: the artifice of the one was defeated by the piety of the other. Happy are the people, when under ſuch guides, as have the prudence to direct, and the zeal to defend them againſt the criminal attempts of thoſe, who are ſold to ſeek or adviſe their ruin.

§ XXIII. *Death of Moyſes. Deut.* 34.

THE Moabites having debauched the children of Iſrael from their duty, God commanded Moyſes to revenge himſelf upon them. In obedience to the order Moyſes choſe out twelve thouſand of the moſt valiant of his people, and put them under the command of Phinees, hoping that the zeal, which he had lately ſhown in the cauſe of God, would draw down a bleſſing upon his arms. Nor did his hope deceive him. The twelve thouſand Iſraelites fell upon the united forces of Moab, and cut them to pieces: all the chief men of the country, and the wicked Balaam amongſt them, were without mercy put to the ſword, their country plundered, and their cities burnt to the ground. The conquerors returned with a very rich booty, driving the women and vaſt herds of cattle before them into the camp. Moyſes went out to meet them, and expreſſed great diſſatisfaction with the officers for having ſpared the women, who had been the chief

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chief agents in perverting the Iſraelites. He therefore gave ſtrict orders to have them all executed, as guilty of death, excepting the virgins, who had not ſhared in the guilt: theſe amounted to the number of thirty-two thouſand, and with the reſt of the ſpoils, after a certain part had been ſet aſide for the Lord, were diſtributed amongſt the people. This being done, Moyſes allotted the conquered lands to the tribes of Ruben and Gad, and to one half of the tribe of Manaſſe, upon condition that they helped their brethren to ſubdue the country, that lay on the other ſide of the Jordan.

As mention of the twelve tribes is often made, and as the land of promiſe was to be parcelled out amongſt them under that title, we may obſerve once for all, that the tribes take their name from the twelve ſons of Jacob, viz. Ruben, Simeon, Levi, Juda, Dan, Nephthali, Gad, Aſer, Iſſachar, Zabulon, Joſeph, Benjamin. Ruben by the crime of inceſt having forfeited his right of primogeniture, the privileges annexed to it, were divided amongſt his brethren: thoſe privileges were the prieſthood, the ſceptre, and a double portion of his family eſtate. The firſt was given to Levi, the ſecond to Juda, and the third to Joſeph, whoſe two ſons, Ephraim and Manaſſe, were by Jacob reputed as his own: hence each of them has his ſhare amongſt the twelve diviſions of the promiſed land, and the tribe of Levi, who was to live diſperſed amongſt the other twelve, and to receive the tythes of all their lands, ſhared no particular part of the ſoil.

Moyſes having brought the Iſraelites as far as the river Jordan, which he knew he was not to paſs, ſent for Joſue, and in the preſence of the people inveſted him with the civil power of governing the people in his ſtead from that day: for the ſacerdotal power, by God's command, had been already given to Eleazar, the ſon and ſucceſſor of Aaron, a little before his death, on the mountain of Hor. The holy law-giver, knowing his end to be near at hand, repeatedly exhorted Joſue to execute the truſt repoſed in him, with all the zeal and magnanimity he was capable of: he told him, that the taſk

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he had upon his hands, was nothing leſs than the conqueſt of the promiſed land, and an equitable diſtribution of the ſame amongſt the people: he recapitulated all, that had paſſed from the time they had left Egypt to the preſent day, the unwearied pains he had taken to conduct them thus far, the prodigies God had wrought for forty years together in their favour, the precepts he had given them, and the promiſes he had made them, upon condition, that they remained faithful in his love and ſervice. After this God commanded him to go up to the top of mount Nebo, from whence there was an extenſive view of the land of promiſe. He bleſſed God at the ſight, and humbly ſubmitted to the divine will, which did not permit him to ſet his foot thereon: he there gave his laſt bleſſing to the tribes of Iſrael, and ſlept with his forefathers, having completed the hundred and twentieth year of his age. The people mourned for him in the plains of Moab thirty days: he was buried in the valley over-againſt Phogor, but the ſpot of his ſepulchre no one knows to the preſent day.

Thus, in the ſight and on the very borders of the promiſed land, for which he had undergone ſo many dangers, had borne ſo many labours, and had been privileged with the gift of working ſo many miracles, died the holy prophet, the great law-giver, and deliverer of the Hebrew people. Equally admirable for his meekneſs, as for his fortitude of mind, he united a fatherly tenderneſs for his people with an inflexible fidelity to God. By divine inſpiration he wrote the five firſt books of the holy Bible, which he gave to the Levites to be carefully depoſited in the tabernacle by the ſide of the Ark. The circumſtances of his death as to time and place ſeem to have been intended by Almighty God not for the trial only, but for the perfection of his ſervant's virtue. However deſirous he might naturally be of entering into the land of Chanaan, a land ſo often promiſed to Abraham, to Iſaac, and to Jacob, a land ſo fertile and ſo teeming with delights, yet he knew it to be no more, than the figure of a more delightful and more permanent inheritance. It is by weaning our affections

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from the earth, as Moyſes did, it is by dying, like him, to our earthly deſires, it is in fine by a perfect reſignation to the will of God through the various trials and afflictions of life, that we muſt open to ourſelves a paſſage into that heavenly kingdom, which God has promiſed to thoſe, who love him, and keep his commandments.

§ XXIV. *Paſſage of the Jordan. Joſue 3.*

A. M. 2553. *Before J.C.* 1447. UPON Moyſes's demiſe, Joſue was acknowledged his ſucceſſor in the ſupreme temporal command, and in that capacity received the promiſe of fidelity from the body of the people. He was a man of conſummate wiſdom, and qualified with every other virtue for the high ſtation he was called to. The Iſraelites under his command lay encamped upon the bank of the river Jordan, which God commanded them to paſs. Three days were employed in making the neceſſary diſpoſitions: every thing being ready, Joſue ordered the heralds to give public notice thro' the camp, that as ſoon as they ſhould ſee the Prieſts begin to move forward with the Ark of the Covenant, they ſhould all riſe and follow at the diſtance of two thouſand cubits. The Prieſts, who carried the Ark upon their ſhoulders, ſet forward at the ſignal given, and advanced to the edge of the Jordan. Their feet no ſooner touched the ſtream, than the river ſtopped its courſe: the waters below ran off as uſual into the dead ſea, while thoſe above were collected in a heap, as they flowed down from their ſource, and ſtood like a high ſwelling mountain in one place. A dry and open paſſage was thereby left acroſs the bed of the river: the Prieſts advanced with the Ark as far as the middle of the channel, and there halted, till the whole hoſt of Iſrael had reached the oppoſite bank near the town of Jericho. When they were over, Joſue, by the expreſs command of God, ordered twelve choſen men, one out of every tribe, to fetch twelve large ſtones from the ſpot, where the Prieſts were ſtill ſtanding with the Ark, and to erect in

in the place, where they were to encamp that night, a ſtanding monument of their gratitude to God for ſo miraculous an event. He alſo ordered them to carry twelve other ſtones from the bank, and to pile them up after the ſame manner in the middle of the dry channel; which being done, he commanded the Prieſts to come forwards with the Ark. The Prieſts were no ſooner come up, and began to tread upon the dry ground, than the waters of Jordan returned into their channel and flowed, as they were wont before. Thus under the divine influence did Joſue begin to diſplay his talents, and to ſignalize his name at the head of the Iſraelites.

In this miraculous paſſage of the Jordan, God has been pleaſed to ſignify to us the more ſpiritual wonders, he was to work in after ages, when thro' the waters of baptiſm he leads his children of adoption into the true land of promiſe, which is his Church. For the paſſage of the Jordan is a figure of baptiſm, by the grace of which the new-born Chriſtian paſſes from the ſlavery of ſin into a ſtate of freedom, peculiar to the choſen ſons of God. Happy is the man, who being faithful to the grace, which he then received, has the will to check the torrent of his corrupt inclinations, and turns the flow of his affections towards God, the ſource of virtue and real happineſs.

§ XXV. *Taking of Jericho. Joſue 6.*

THE Hebrew people were now entered into the country, which Almighty God had ſo often and ſo ſolemnly promiſed to their forefathers. The firſt town, that ſtood in their way, was Jericho, whither Joſue had already ſent two ſpies to reconnoitre the place. The prince of Jericho had been informed not only of their arrival, but of the very houſe, in which they lodged, and ſent to have them ſeized. Rahab, their hoſteſs, concealed them upon the roof of her houſe till the king's meſſengers were gone, and then let them down the wall by a *A. M.* 2553. *Before J. C.* 1447.

cord. These spies, very different from those, who had been sent by Moyses forty years before, far from being disheartened at the sight of a fortification, encouraged their countrymen to march boldly on, assuring them, that from the observations they had made, the town would quickly fall an easy conquest to them. For at the approach of a people, of whom such prodigies had been related, the townsmen were thrown into so great a consternation, that they had no hope of safety left, but in the strength of their walls and ramparts. And what is the strength of walls and ramparts against the arm of the Almighty? Josue, in the name of God, gave orders for his people to make a general procession round the walls of Jericho for seven days together, and on the seventh day to go seven times round; the troops under arms to march in the first place, the Ark to go next supported by Priests, and immediately preceded by seven other Priests, sounding their trumpets of Jubilee as they went along, and lastly the rest of the people to close the rear with sound of trumpet. These orders were punctually executed. On the seventh day, as they were making the seventh round, the trumpets sounded, according to God's order, and the people shouted. The mingled shouts and clangors were still thundering in the ears of the multitude, when the walls instantly fell down, and opened the Israelites an entrance into the city. Each one rushed forward over the crumbled ruins, that lay before him; they took possession of the town, and as Josue had commanded, put all the inhabitants to the sword, excepting Rahab, who for the service she had done the spies, was saved from the general massacre. Josue had moreover cautioned them not to appropriate to themselves any part of the spoils, which he had solemnly consecrated to the Lord.

In this manner fell the strong town of Jericho; at the trumpet's sound her walls tumbled down, and the strong bastions, which she fancied to be impregnable, sunk at once into dust. The holy Fathers have taken particular notice of this miraculous transaction, and they tell us, that the flourishing sound of trumpets represented the glorious

glorious preaching of the Goſpel. The ſame ſound, which inſpired the Iſraelites with courage, filled their enemies with terror and alarms. Nothing, ſays Saint Ambroſe, renders the people of God ſo formidable to their enemies, as his holy word carefully explained, and deeply impreſſed upon their minds. By that, as by the trumpet's ſound, they are animated with a lively ſenſe of their duty; by that they are encouraged to reſiſt the enemies of their ſalvation with vigour, and joyfully to rely on God for victory. The followers of Jeſus Chriſt, ſays the ſame Saint Ambroſe, become victorious againſt the powers of Hell, when they devoutly liſten to the truths, and faithfully follow the doctrine of the Goſpel, that is preached to them by the paſtors of their ſouls. Then it is, that they are inſpired with heavenly deſires, that they are confirmed in their good purpoſes, and warmed with the joyful hopes of ſalvation; then it is, that they learn to eſteem their Chriſtian profeſſion, and to trample the world, as another Jericho, with its ſinful vanities under foot.

§ XXVI. *Deſtruction of Hai. Joſue 7.*

THE deſtruction of Jericho was followed by that of Hai, a neighbouring town of no great ſtrength, and incapable, as it was imagined, of making any reſiſtance. Joſue let himſelf be perſuaded, that it was but to haraſs his troops, to lead the main army againſt it, and therefore contented himſelf with a detachment of three thouſand men, which he thought would be ſufficient to reduce ſo inſignificant a place. The troops of Iſrael no ſooner came within ſight of the enemy, than they ſhamefully turned their backs and fled, and in their flight loſt ſix and thirty men. Alarmed at this unexpected check in the very beginning of his conqueſts, Joſue threw himſelf upon the ground, and in humble prayer began to expoſtulate with God, why he had permitted this diſgrace to befall his people. Iſrael has ſinned, replied the *A. M.* 2553. *Before J. C.* 1447.

Lord; they have ſtolen, they have taken of the conſecrated ſpoils, and concealed them: they cannot now ſtand before their enemies; I will be no longer with them, till the man be puniſhed, who is guilty of the wicked deed. Joſue upon that aſſembled the people, and having informed them of the cauſe of their defeat, publicly declared, that the offence muſt be expiated by fire. Without loſing any time he applied the lots to diſcover, who the offender was, and found it to be Achan, of the family of Zare, of the tribe of Juda. Achan ſeeing himſelf thus miraculouſly diſcovered, thought it ſuperfluous to diſſemble any longer; he publicly owned himſelf guilty, and confeſſed, that in the ſacking of Jericho he had been tempted by a ſcarlet cloke, a golden ruler, and two hundred ſicles of ſilver, which he had taken home, and ſecreted in his tent. His tent was ſearched, and the things were found in the very place he had mentioned. Joſue therefore ordered the man to be taken into cuſtody, to be led forth into the vale of Achor, and there ſtoned, till he was dead. The ſentence was immediately executed, and all things belonging to him were committed to the flames. By this public act of juſtice God was again reconciled with his people, and promiſed them the conqueſt of Hai. Joſue ſent five thouſand men to lie in ambuſcade beyond the town, while the body of the army marched into the open valley, that lay before it. The townſmen, being fluſhed with their late ſucceſs, ruſhed eagerly out to attack them. The Iſraelites, with well-diſſembled fear, immediately turned their backs. The enemy, concluding their flight to be the effect of real fear, as it had been before, purſued them to a great diſtance. The Iſraelites having thus drawn them off from the town, Joſue, as had been agreed upon, lifted up his ſhield againſt the city, and they, who were in ambuſcade, riſing at the ſignal, ſet fire to the defenceleſs town, and then puſhed on to attack the enemies rear. Joſue diſcovering the ſucceſs by the ſmoke, that roſe from the town, faced about with his army, and attacked alſo in his turn. The Chananeans ſeeing themſelves thus incloſed between two armies, no longer thought of making

making any reſiſtance. They were all cut off to a man, and their city reduced to aſhes.

Saint Chryſoſtom, in the reflection he makes upon the misfortune, that befell the Iſraelites on account of Achan's ſin, expreſſes his concern for the Church-militant, of which that people were the figure. When he conſiders a whole army ſo ſeverely chaſtiſed for the crime of one ſoldier, he is ſurpriſed at the unconcern of thoſe who ſport away their time in the midſt of ſinners. He therefore earneſtly exhorts every Chriſtian to ſhun the company of notorious ſinners, and to guard againſt the contagion of vice. We never ought to be without fear; we are never ſafe againſt the infection of others faults. In the midſt of a corrupt world, it is no ſmall taſk to preſerve ourſelves from being tainted by it: to be innocent, our hearts muſt be equally unſullied, as our hands. Achan was not leſs guilty in the ſight of God, before his crime was known, than when diſcovered to the eyes of men. It is not the appearance, it is the reality of virtue, that conſtitutes the merit of a Chriſtian: the appearance indeed may impoſe on men, who ſee only the outſide; the reality alone is acceptable to God, who beholds the heart.

§ XXVII. *The Sun ſtands ſtill. Joſue* 10.

THE name of the Hebrew people was now known as far as mount Libanus, in the moſt northern part of the country. The petty kings of Chanaan grew alarmed at their rapid progreſs, and reſolved to unite their forces together for the common ſafety. The inhabitants of Gabaon were the only ſtate, that refuſed to join in the confederacy. Theſe people wiſely foreſaw the conſequence of a war, that ſhould be undertaken againſt a nation ſo cheriſhed by Heaven. Open force they perceived muſt inevitably end in their own ruin: they had recourſe to ſtratagem. They ſent deputies to Joſue, as from a people living at a great diſtance, who had heard

A. M. 2553. *Before J. C.* 1447.

of

of his achievements, and ſolicited his friendſhip. To make their ſtory more plauſible, they produced a few ſtale loaves of hard and dry bread, which they pretended had been baked the very day they left home, and appeared in old tattered clothes, that might look as if they had been worn out by the length of the journey. Joſue at firſt ſuſpected ſome fraud, but truſting too much to appearances and his own judgment, let himſelf be impoſed upon. He did not conſult God upon the matter, as the ſacred writer obſerves, but unadviſedly concluded a treaty of alliance with the Gabaonites, and bound himſelf by oath not to deſtroy them. In leſs than three days he found himſelf upon the territories of thoſe very people, which he had fancied at an inconceivable diſtance. His troops began to exclaim againſt the cheat, that had been put upon them; they thought it unreaſonable, that ſuch impoſtors ſhould be ſuffered to live, and would actually have put them all to the ſword, if Joſue had not interpoſed, and alledged the ſanctity of his oath. To allay the warmth of their reſentment, and to ſilence their complaints, he told them, that the Gabaonites ſhould be the ſlaves of Iſrael, and be for ever employed in cutting wood and carrying water for their ſervice. Gabaon being thus preſerved from the arms of Iſrael, was in conſequence expoſed to the danger of being ruined by thoſe of Chanaan. Adonibeſec, the king of Jeruſalem, had been long jealous of that city, on account of its ſtately grandeur and the valour of its inhabitants; and the late alliance, ſhe had made with the Iſraelites, made him now look upon her not only as a rival, but as a dangerous enemy of his power. He therefore reſolved to exert the whole force of his kingdom againſt her: he prevailed upon four other princes of the country to join him in the enterprize, and marched at the head of a great army as to certain victory. The Gabaonites ſeeing themſelves attacked by ſo ſuperior a force, applied to Joſue, their new ally, for aſſiſtance. Their application gave Joſue a fair opportunity of ſtriking ſome deciſive ſtroke againſt the common enemy, and of extending his conqueſt over the country. He led an army

army againſt the five confederate kings, whom he attacked and defeated with great ſlaughter. The remains of their army endeavoured to ſave themſelves by flight. Joſue perceived the day was faſt upon the decline; he ſaw the night coming on, before he could complete his victory, and thereupon commanded the ſun not to move againſt Gabaon, nor the moon againſt the valley of Aialon. The ſun and moon therefore ſtood ſtill, while he finiſhed the overthrow of his enemies; for God obeyed the voice of man, ſays the holy Scripture, and neither before nor after was there ever ſeen ſo long a day.

So ſingular an effect of the divine power, exerted at the voice of man, muſt naturally rouſe the faith, at the ſame time, that it excites the admiration of all, who read it. The ſame omnipotent hand of God, which gave exiſtence to the univerſe, which fixed the earth, the ſun, moon and ſtars, and bade them move in their reſpective ſpheres, according to the laws he gave them, can at pleaſure alter or ſuſpend thoſe laws, as he ſhall judge expedient either for his own glory, or for the ſpecial benefit of his favorite ſervants. But when we ſee the Almighty thus condeſcend to the wants of weak mortals, and for their ſervice work ſuch ſtupendous changes in the order of nature, we are then called upon to renew our belief in his divinity, to adore his power, to revere his wiſdom, and obey his commands, leſt we ſeem leſs rational and leſs ſenſible of our duty, than the very inanimate parts of the creation.

§ XXVIII. *Puniſhment of Adonibeſec. Judges* I.

JOSUE, by the might of God's arm, bore down all before him: victory attended him where ever he turned his arms, and every day was ſignalized by ſome new conqueſt. By the rapid progreſs of his arms the Hebrew people took poſſeſſion of the land of Chanaan, as of their own inheritance. At the end of ſix years ſcarce an enemy was left to face him in the field. The Scripture mentions *A. M.* 2570, *Before J. C.* 1430.

mentions no leſs than one and thirty kings, who had yielded to his arms. Moſt of the old inhabitants of the country fell victims to his ſword; for God permitted no more of them to remain alive, than might be ſufficient to exerciſe the courage, or to puniſh the infidelity of his own people. Joſue having made himſelf maſter of the country by his valour, diſplayed an equal wiſdom in the diſtribution he made of it amongſt the conquerors. He obſerved ſo nice and impartial an equity towards every tribe, that no room was left either for cenſure or complaint. He had now completed the glorious work, to which God had called him; he had ſubdued the promiſed land, and eſtabliſhed the Iſraelites in the quiet poſſeſſion of it. Finding himſelf to be near his end, he called the Iſraelites together, as Moyſes had done before him, and reminded them of the wonders, that God had wrought in their favour: he exhorted, beſought, and conjured them, till he obtained their promiſe, not to ſerve any other God, than the Lord of the univerſe. Having thus happily diſcharged his duty both to God and his people, Joſue ſlept with his forefathers, in the hundred and tenth year of his age, and was mourned for by all the people. To him is attributed the book, which bears his name amongſt the ſacred writings. During the whole time that he governed the Hebrew people, he was happy never to ſee them fall into any acts of idolatry, nor to hear them utter any complaints againſt the Lord. The battles he fought, and the conqueſts he made, have given occaſion to the following remark of the holy Fathers, that no one can pretend to inherit the promiſed bleſſings of Almighty God, till he has happily ſubdued thoſe domeſtic enemies, his ſinful appetites and vicious inclinations, that bear dominion in his heart. By ſin we are born tributary to the Chananean and the Amorrhean, that is to ſay, Satan; and we muſt firſt extirpate ſin, and bring into ſubjection whatever elſe there is in us belonging to Satan, before we can be poſſeſſed of the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt.

Upon the death of Joſue, Caleb put himſelf at the head of the tribe of Juda, and diſtinguiſhed himſelf by many

many victories, that he gained againſt the remaining enemies of his nation. Adonibeſec, the cruel tyrant of Jeruſalem, was the firſt, that felt the vengeance of his arm. By a juſt judgment of God, this wicked prince experienced the ſame barbarous treatment from the ſons of Juda, as he had once inflicted upon others. At different times no leſs than ſeventy kings had had the misfortune to be his priſoners: he cut off the extremities of their hands and feet, and forced them to lick up the leavings of his table. The children of Juda had no ſooner laid their hands upon him, than they treated him in the ſame manner, and ſent him to Jeruſalem to drag out life by a lingering death.

In the reverſe of this tyrant's fortune is verified the truth of that ſentence, where our bleſſed Saviour has ſince declared, that he will paſs judgment upon men, as they ſhall have paſſed judgment upon others. The ſentence is univerſal; it makes no diſtinction between the king and the ſubject: if it is not executed during life, its ſeverity is the more to be dreaded after death. An impartial and all-knowing Judge will then pronounce according to the merits of each particular; and by the mouth of the wiſeſt of kings, he has already declared, That the mighty, if they abuſe their power, ſhall ſuffer mighty torments.

§ XXIX. *Deborah's triumph. Judges 4.*

AFTER the death of Joſue, and of thoſe virtuous ſages, who had ſeen the wonders, that God had wrought during their forty years pilgrimage thro' the deſert, the Iſraelites fell into very great diſorders. Being no longer united under one head, each tribe began to purſue a ſeparate intereſt: they made war or peace, entered into treaties and alliances, as party intereſt and paſſion led them: they intermarried with the idolatrous inhabitants of the land, ſo by degrees grew familiar with their vices, imbibed their principles, and fell from the worſhip of *A. M.* 2719, *Before J. C.* 1281.

God to the worſhip of idols. To puniſh them for their apoſtacy, God made uſe of thoſe very people, who had ſeduced them from their duty. By them they were at different times reduced to a ſtate of ſervitude, and tyrannically oppreſſed, till the ſmart of temporal misfortunes rouſed them up to a ſenſe of their duty, and made them return to God by repentance. Ever mindful of his mercies to men, God was pleaſed to liſten to their cries: for their relief he called forth ſome extraordinary perſonages, who from the authority they had over the people, are called Judges. The king of Meſopotamia was the firſt ſcourge, that God employed to make his people ſenſible of their crimes. From this king the Iſraelites ſuffered bitter hardſhips; they at length acknowledged the hand of God in their ſufferings, and repented. By the abilities of Othoniel, the nephew of Caleb, they ſhook off the Meſopotamian yoke, and regained the divine favour, till a run of forty years proſperity made them forget their duty again; they relapſed into idolatry, and the Moabites were employed to chaſtiſe them for it. They ſuffered all the calamities of war for eighteen years, when upon their having recourſe to God, Aod roſe up in their defence, and reſtored peace to Iſrael. But the repentance of that unſteady people never laſted many years. They fell into freſh ſins, and in puniſhment thereof were delivered into the hands of Jabin, king of Chanaan. Siſara, the Chananean general, poured out the evils of war upon them for twenty years together, and ſo great was the number of troops and armed chariots, which he led to battle, that the Iſraelites were afraid to face him in the open field. The Hebrew commonwealth was at that time governed by Debora, a woman full of the ſpirit of God, and as much renowned for her prudence in peace, as for her fortitude in war. In the dangerous ſituation of affairs ſhe ſent for Barac, of whoſe abilities ſhe had a good opinion, made him her general, and ordered him to march with ten thouſand men againſt Siſara. Barac refuſed to accept of the command, unleſs ſhe would accompany him into the field. She conſented, and God was pleaſed to ſtrike ſuch a panic into the Chananeans, that

that their army fled at her approach, and left the Iſraelites nothing to do, but to kill and take priſoners. Siſara was borne away by the torrent, and endeavoured to ſave himſelf in the pavilion of Jahel, the wife of Heber the Cinite. Spent with fatigue he there laid himſelf down upon the ground to ſleep; and as he lay, Jahel took a nail, and with a hammer driving it through his temples nailed him to the ground. By his death an end was put to Jabin's tyranny, and the Iſraelites enjoyed the tranquility of a forty years peace.

In thankſgiving for the victory Debora ſung to God a ſolemn hymn, in which the higheſt praiſes are beſtowed upon Jahel for her heroic fortitude. Fortitude and wiſdom are the gifts of God, who at his pleaſure diſtributes them, as he pleaſes: by them he makes women equally capable, as men, of the greateſt undertakings. Debora by her wiſdom kept that rebellious people in obedience, which Moyſes with all his authority had been ſcarce able to effect: ſhe was the firſt woman, that governed the Hebrew nation, and from her government was derived every advantage, that could have been expected from the wiſeſt and moſt valiant of men. She took every prudent ſtep to promote the public good; ſhe raiſed the drooping ſpirits of her ſubjects, muſtered her troops, choſe her officers, directed their operations, and marched to battle at their head. The ſpirit and the hand of God carried her victoriouſly through the moſt perilous undertakings. Hence the holy Fathers obſerve, that nothing can be truly great, which is not begun and guided by the ſpirit of God. Under that divine influence, the weaker ſex becomes capable of the moſt difficult enterprizes, and without it men degenerate into the weakeſt of the weak. What appears the leaſt capable in the eyes of a conceited world, God ſometimes chuſes, that he may confound the wiſe; and he chuſes the weak to confound the ſtrong.

§ XXX

§ XXX. *Gedeon's ſacrifice. Judges 6.*

A. M. 2789. *Before J. C.* 1241. UPON the death of Debora the Iſraelites, being no longer reſtrained by authority, fell back into ſuch a ſtate of licentiouſneſs, that God abandoned them for ſeven years to the power of the Madianites. The Madianites were a cruel enemy, who ravaged and deſtroyed the whole country. The diſtreſs, to which the Iſraelites were then reduced, became extreme, and extorted from them the cries of repentance. God heard their cries, and fixed upon Gedeon for their deliverer. Gedeon was a valiant young man, of an obſcure family, of the tribe of Manaſſe. God ſent an Angel to inform him, that the Lord was with him, and that upon the ſtrength of his arm depended the ſafety of Iſrael. The Angel, in the form and habit of a ſtranger, preſented himſelf in view under an oak tree, near the place where Gedeon was winnowing his father's corn. The heavenly meſſenger delivered his commiſſion to the choſen youth, and aſſured him, that notwithſtanding the low opinion he entertained of himſelf, he ſhould drive the Madianites before him, and deſtroy them, as eaſily, as if they were but one man. Gedeon deſired to know, upon what grounds he had made him that extraordinary promiſe, and begged he would not go, till he had taken ſome refreſhment. The Angel having accepted his offer, he quickly ran to prepare a kid, and unleavened bread. He boiled the kid, and as ſoon as it was ready, put the fleſh of it into a baſket, and the broth into a pot, to carry to his gueſt under the tree. The Angel bade him lay the bread and meat upon the rock, and pour the broth thereon: which being done, he touched them with a rod he held in his hand, and behold, a ſudden flame blazed out of the rock, and conſumed both the fleſh and the loaves. The heavenly meſſenger vaniſhed immediately out of ſight, leaving Gedeon half dead with fright for having converſed ſo long with an Angel, whom he had all the while taken for a common man. Almighty God inſpired Gedeon with,

with a holy confidence, and commiſſioned him to go and overturn the altar of Baal, to cut down the grove, that ſurrounded it, and to erect upon the ſummit of the ſame rock an altar to the living God, where he ſhould offer one of his father's bullocks in ſacrifice. Gedeon was afraid of being murdered by the inhabitants, ſhould he attempt any ſuch thing by day; he therefore deferred it till night, when with the help of his ſervants he executed every part of the command. The inhabitants next morning were ſtrangely ſurpriſed to ſee their grove cut down, and the altar overturned. Being much exaſperated, they made diligent ſearch after the author of the fact, and upon inquiry having found it to be Gedeon, went to Joas his father, and inſiſted that he ſhould bring forth his ſon, and deliver him over to be puniſhed, as he deſerved. Joas aſked them in reply, if they were the avengers of Baal, or appointed to fight his battles? If Baal be a God, ſaid he, let him revenge himſelf on the man, who hath caſt down his altar: it belongs not to you. The men upon that deſiſted from their purſuit: Gedeon eſcaped with impunity, and from that day obtained the ſurname of Jerobaal.

Gedeon by his example teaches thoſe, who are appointed to the care and government of others, with what exact fidelity and watchful prudence they ought to execute the commands and promote the ſervice of Almighty God, whatever may be the labour or the danger, that attends them in the performance of their duty.

§ XXXI. *Miracle of the fleece. Judges 6.*

GEDEON being miraculouſly aſſured, that God had choſen him for the relief of a diſtreſt nation, was ſuddenly inveſted with the ſpirit of the Lord, at the very time, that the Madianites and Amalecites were in common council plotting the deſtruction of Iſrael. He ſnatched up a trumpet, and ſounded the alarm; he gave orders for the tribes to aſſemble, and follow him to battle. *A. M.* 2759, *Before J. C.* 1241.

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They immediately obeyed his ſummons, as from God, and unanimouſly acknowledged him for their chief. Thus from a private ſtation, without intereſt or birth, Gedeon was raiſed to the ſupreme command of the Hebrew nation. Far from being elated by the honour of preferment, he ſtill entertained the ſame humble ſentiments of his own abilities; diffident of himſelf, he reſted his truſt in God, from whom he had received his authority. Not ſatisfied with theſe firſt aſſurances of the divine appointment in his favour, he ſuſpended his military operations, till by ſome new miracle God ſhould more explicitly make known his will and intentions to him. This caution and humble diffidence, which Gedeon expreſſed in accepting his employment, is a good inſtruction, ſays Saint Ambroſe, to thoſe, who fancy themſelves qualified for and eagerly graſp at every truſt and honorary employment, that preſents itſelf to them. Gedeon therefore begged of Almighty God to confirm the choice, he had made of him, by a miracle, that he himſelf ſhould ſpecify. If the fleece of wool, ſaid he to Almighty God, which I will expoſe all night to the open air, ſhall be ſoaked with dew, while the graſs around it continues dry, then ſhall I conclude, that thou intendeſt to ſave Iſrael by my hand. The event anſwered his expectation; and yet ſo diffident was he of himſelf, that he wiſhed for ſome further ſign from Heaven, and humbly beſought the Lord to exhibit a ſecond miracle, that ſhould be the reverſe of the firſt: he begged that the fleece only might be dry, and the ground wet with dew. The Lord was pleaſed to condeſcend to his requeſt, and there was dryneſs in the fleece, that had lain expoſed the whole night, and dew on all the ground.

Theſe two miracles, according to the holy Fathers, mark the difference of conduct, which God has followed with regard to the Jews and Gentiles. The Jews were once viſited by that more plentiful effuſion of his holy graces, by which he ſelected them from the midſt of other nations, and made them his choſen people; till by their incredulity they rejected the divine gifts, and ungratefully abuſed the ſacred blood, which the Meſſias

ſhed

ſhed for their ſalvation. More ſenſible of the mercy, and more obedient to the voice, that called them into the admirable light of divine faith, the Gentiles then became the ſpecial people of Jeſus Chriſt. The mercies of our great Redeemer extend over the face of the whole earth; his graces are poured out from ſea to ſea to the uttermoſt limits of the globe, for the ſalvation of all mankind. His grace is, as a celeſtial dew, with which our ſouls are refreſhed againſt the heat of paſſions, and enabled to produce the fruits of eternal life.

§ XXXII. *Gedeon's ſoldiers. Judges 7.*

GEDEON by the two miracles of his own chuſing was fully aſſured of the divine will in his regard; he was convinced, that God had appointed him not only to command the troops, but alſo to reap the victory, and therefore prepared to execute the important charge with as much eagerneſs, as he had at firſt ſhown unwillingneſs to accept it. Vaſt numbers of voluntary recruits flocked daily to his ſtandard: his army ſoon made a very formidable appearance; he took the field and encamped within ſight of the enemy. Almighty God foreſaw, that the preſumption and ingratitude of a ſtiff necked people would make them attribute to themſelves the victory, if it were gained by ſuch numbers, and reſolved that they ſhould not only owe, but moreover own their ſucceſs ſolely to him. He therefore commanded Gedeon to diſband part of his troops, and to proclaim thro' the camp, that every one, who was not diſpoſed to undergo the fatigue, or afraid to ſtand the ſhock of war, might peaceably return to his own dwelling. Two and twenty thouſand of them readily accepted the offer, and only ten thouſand remained to ſupport the ſervice of their country. But to anſwer the deſigns of God that number was ſtill too great: God commanded Gedeon to lead his army to the waters, where he would let him know the preciſe number, that he had choſen for the ſervice. He bade him

A. M. 2759, *Before J. C.* 1241.

him obſerve the poſture, in which his ſoldiers ſhould drink, when he came to the waters, whether they knelt down to ſlake their thirſt at leiſure, or only catched a ſparing draught in the hollow of their hand, as they haſtily paſſed along; that they & only they, who ſhould drink in this manner, were the men, to whom he had reſolved to grant the victory. When Gedeon came to the waters, he attentively obſerved his men, and of his whole army there were no more, than three hundred, who did not kneel down to drink. He immediately diſbanded the reſt, and full of confidence in the divine promiſe marched on with his little troop againſt the Madianites.

In this inſtance we may obſerve the diſtinction, that Almighty God makes of thoſe, who engage in his ſervice, and how ſmall the number is of his choſen champions; ſince of the two and thirty thouſand, that followed Gedeon to war, twenty two thouſand took themſelves off at once, and of the ten thouſand, that remained, three hundred only were reſerved for victory. The mark of their election was their not bending the knee to drink; mindful of their character even in little things, they ſought no contrivance for their eaſe, they ſcooped up a paſſing refreſhment in the palm of their hand, and were contented with a ſcanty draught to allay their thirſt upon the march: in like manner whoever engages in the divine ſervice, and we are all engaged by the promiſes we made at baptiſm, ought not to ſtoop down towards the earth beyond what is required to ſupply the wants of nature: ever mindful of our baptiſmal engagements, and ſteady in the divine ſervice, we ought to ſtand always upon our guard, and to keep our affections ſtill fixed on heaven. If compelled by neceſſity we make uſe of this world, it ought to be in the ſenſe of Saint Paul, as if we uſed it not. If for the comfort or ſupport of life, which is conſtantly flowing off like a ſwift ſtream, we partake of the benefit of God's creatures, it ought to be without any ſtrong attachment to them, without any ſtop or hinderance in our way to heaven. The number of ſuch Chriſtians is indeed but ſmall; but ſuch there are; they are the choſen few, and it is in ſuch, that the Church of Chriſt

chiefly

chiefly glories; with these she stands invulnerable against her enemies, and with these she conquers.

§ XXXIII. *Gedeon's victory. Judges 7.*

THO' nothing could be more explicit, than were the promises, which God had so often made to Gedeon of success, and tho' Gedeon did no longer entertain the smallest doubt of the event, yet it pleased the divine goodness to make him hear the same assurances of victory confirmed by the Madianites themselves. Gedeon by advice from God rose in the dead of the night, and being accompanied by a single servant, went into the enemies camp to collect what intelligence he could. He listened to every sound, and catched up every word, as he stole cautiously along. He heard one of the Madianite soldiers telling his comrade a dream, which he had had relative to the event of the war. I seemed to see, said the soldier, a barley loaf rolling thro' the camp, till it struck against one of the tents, and threw it down. It is the sword of Gedeon, immediately replied the other, that is here signified; to him the Lord has delivered our armies, and by him the tents of Madian shall be struck and overthrown. Upon hearing this, Gedeon made the best of his way back, and encouraged his troops to action by the relation of this story. He lost no time; he divided his three hundred men into three separate companies, and accoutred them with arms equally new and mysterious. He gave to each a trumpet, and an empty pitcher with a burning lamp concealed in the middle of it. He charged them to observe the most profound silence, till he should make them a signal to sound their trumpets, break their pitchers, and produce their lamps, shouting at the same time as with one voice, To the Lord and Gedeon! It was now midnight; they marched in deep silence; the three divisions took possession of the posts, that had been assigned them: Gedeon gave the signal by sound of trumpet, and was answered by his men from their different stations. The Madianites between sleep

A. M. 2759. *Before J. C.* 1241.

ſleep and awake were ſurprized at the unexpected alarm. The glittering of the lamps, the claſh of the pitchers, and the clangors of trumpets, mixed with ſhouts of war from every quarter, made them fancy, that they were ſurrounded by a vaſt army. Their fears magnified their danger, and in that confuſion they turned their ſwords againſt one another, giving to Gedeon a deciſive victory without his ſtriking ſo much as a ſingle ſtroke.

The more ſingular this manner of fighting was, ſays Saint Gregory, the more myſterious it appears. For who ever thought of going to war without arms, or who ever fancied, that an earthen pitcher was a likely weapon againſt a coat of mail? To human wiſdom, uninſtructed in the ſecret ways of divine providence, ſuch a ſcheme might ſeem ridiculous: but what appears mere folly in the eyes of men, God often chuſes in his wiſdom, as the moſt conducive to his deſigns. By this he teaches us, in whom we are to place our greateſt truſt, and to whom we are to look up for ſucceſs in our undertakings. It is not by any bodily or human ſtrength, but by the virtue of Jeſus Chriſt, that the enemies of our ſalvation can be put to flight. The earthen pots, that were borne by Gedeon's men, repreſent theſe brittle frames of our mortal bodies; and they only are to be accounted the worthy ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt, who like him, ſhall be ready to ſacrifice their lives for God's ſervice, and to conquer by their death. Death to ſuch Chriſtians is no more than the breaking of an earthen veſſel; upon the diſſolution of their mortal frame, the luſtre of their virtues, which lay concealed before, is publicly diſcloſed, and like a burning lamp, ſhines to all around. It is what we ſee in the bleſſed martyrs of Chriſt's Church. However weak and even contemptible they may have appeared in their ſufferings, by their virtues they are the ſtrength and ornament of the Church. By their glorious conflicts they made themſelves be admired even by their enemies and perſecutors; their patience triumphed over the rage of tyrants, and their miracles confirm the truth, for which they magnanimouſly fought and conquered.

§ XXXIV.

§ XXXIV. *Death of Abimelec. Judges 9.*

GEDEON by his prudence and military valour having reſcued his country from the hands of the Madianites, retired to his own private home, and there died in a good old age. Amongſt the ſeventy ſons, that he left behind him, there was one called Abimelec, whoſe mother was a native of Sichem. This man, being of a turbulent and ambitious temper, formed a ſtrong party amongſt the Sichimites, by whom he procured himſelf to be made king. Having thus raiſed himſelf above the reach of human laws, he committed ſtrange diſorders in the country, and amongſt other cruelties ſent a band of ruffians to his late father's houſe in Ephra to murder his brothers. The unhappy youths were all taken, excepting Joatham the youngeſt, and ſlain upon one ſtone. Notwithſtanding ſuch acts of violence the Sichimites were much pleaſed with the part they had taken, and aſſembled in a plain to make rejoicings in honour of the king they had choſen. This plain lay at the foot of a hill called Garizim. The young Joatham placed himſelf upon the top of it, and in an audible voice reproached the Sichimites for their ingratitude to a man, who had ſaved their country from ruin. In a figurative ſtile of language he compared them to the trees in a foreſt, who being ambitious of a kingly government, addreſſed themſelves to the olive, to the figtree, and the vine, to be their king: and being refuſed by each in its turn, they at laſt choſe the thorn, who promiſed to take them under his protection. He then turned off his diſcourſe to Almighty God, and begged that, if Gedeon and his family had been injuriouſly requited for their ſervices, a flame might burſt out from that thorn for the ſpeedy deſtruction both of king and people. His petition was granted him. For at the end of three years the Sichimites, growing tired of Abimelec, entered into a conſpiracy to deprive him of his throne. But being too weak

A. M. 2768. Before J. C. 1232.

to

to execute their design, they themselves became a sacrifice to Abimelec's superior power, and their town was levelled with the ground. The citizens of Sichem being thus punished for their ingratitude by the very man, whom they had raised from nothing, the tyrant himself soon experienced the like vengeance. Flushed with the success, that had hitherto attended him, he began to flatter himself, that God had either forgot his crimes, or would suffer them to go unpunished. But God stretches not his patience beyond the limits, that he himself has fixed: he often permits the greatest criminals to prosper for a while, that his glory may be the more manifest either in their repentance or in their punishment: he often strikes, when they least expect it, and in a moment throws them down from their towering height, in which they thought themselves secure: and so it happened to the tyrant Abimelec: he was cut off at the very time, that he flattered himself with the hopes of new victories. He had laid siege to the town of Thebes, and forced the inhabitants to retreat to their last hold, a tower in the middle of the city. He was eager to set fire to it, and approaching too near, was knocked down by a stone, which a woman cast upon his head. Not less chagrined at the stroke, than confounded at the thought of dying by a woman's hand, he ordered his armour-bearer to run him through. His order was obeyed; and thus by a violent death the wretched man repaid the punishment, that was owing for the murder of his brothers.

The example of Abimelec, say the holy Fathers, is a proof, that no passion so disposes the mind to deeds of cruelty, as an inordinate thirst of power. Ambition, when it has once taken possession of the heart, destroys all respect for kindred, and blunts the very feelings of humanity. The sacred ties of friendship are regarded no longer; the laws of honour and common probity are violently broken through, and nothing is left untried, that can be thought to open a way to the enchanting object.

§ XXXV. *Jephte's daughter. Judges* 11.

AFTER the death of Abimelec, the reins of government passed successively thro' the hands of Thola & Jair; the latter was succeeded by Jephte. Jephte was the son of Galaad, a man naturally valiant and a great warrior, but being base-born was compelled by his brothers to quit his father's house, as having no right to any part of their family inheritance. He retired into the land of Tob, where a lawless troop of banditti chose him for their leader. In the mean time the Israelites, who had left the worship of Almighty God for that of Baal and Astaroth, were grievously harassed by the Ammonites: for they were the scourge, that God had chosen to chastise his faithless people for their apostacy. Sufferings made the delinquents sensible of their error. Their first concern was to appease the wrath of God by repentance, and then to look out for some able general to command their armies. They fixed their eyes on Jephte, with whose courage they were well acquainted; they sent deputies to offer him the command, and to beg his aid in the nation's distress. Jephte at first reproached the deputies for having suffered a man, of whom they professed so good an opinion, to be reduced to the necessity of seeking bread in a foreign land; but upon their promise of submitting entirely to his authority, he grew calm, and consented to be their leader. Before he entered upon action, he did all he could by treaty to dissuade the Ammonites from acts of hostility against the Israelites: but finding his reasons had no effect upon men, who thought themselves injured, he collected an army and prepared for battle. In order to draw down a blessing upon his arms, he made a vow to God of sacrificing in his honour whomsoever he should first meet coming from his own house after the victory. He fought, and conquered. Fame soon spread the joyful news thro' the country. His only daughter, attended by other maidens of her acquaintance, went out dancing to the sound of the tabour and other musical instruments, to

A. M. 2817. Before J. C. 1183.

XXXV. meet

meet her victorious father. But what a damp to the victor's joy, and what grief to a fond father, was the ſight of an only daughter in ſuch circumſtances! With tears in his eyes he told her the vow, he had made. She conſented, ſhe even exhorted him to fulfil his promiſe to Almighty God, and declared herſelf happy to yield even her life as a holocauſt to the Lord, who was the giver and diſpoſer of it. The only thing ſhe aſked was a reſpite of two months, that ſhe might retire into the mountains with her female friends, and there bemoan her hapleſs virginity. The two months being expired, ſhe came back to her father, and he fulfilled his vow.

The interpreters of holy Scripture differ in the judgments they form upon the nature and performance of Jephte's vow. Some think that Jephte's meaning was to conſecrate to God whatſoever ſhould firſt meet him, according to the condition of the thing; and therefore conclude, as human ſacrifices were forbidden by the Law, that he did not ſpil his daughter's blood, but conſecrated her to God by a vow of perpetual virginity; for ſhe lived and died a virgin. But the moſt common opinion is, that Jephte, in conſequence of the vow he had made, ſlew his daughter, as a holocauſt to the Lord, being led thereunto either by a falſe and erroneous conſcience, or by a particular diſpenſation from the Law on the part of Almighty God, who is the ſovereign maſter of life and death. However that may have been with reſpect to the father, we cannot ſufficiently admire the dutiful behaviour, and amiable ſimplicity of the daughter, who voluntarily ſubmitted to her parent's will, and exhorted him to do, as he had vowed. To die to ſin, to reſign the pomps of a dicentious world, to renounce thoſe pleaſures and incentives to vice, which are inconſiſtent with a clean heart, is a ſacrifice truly meritorious, and acceptable to God: it is a ſacrifice, which was ſolemnly begun at the font of baptiſm, which ought to be daily renewed, and muſt be freely continued on to the end of life, that it may be crowned with the promiſed recompenſe by Him, to whom it is religiouſly offered, and is juſtly due.

§ XXXVI.

§ XXXVI. *Birth of Samson.* *Judges* 14.

JEPHTE judged Israel six years; after which succeeded several other judges, of whom the sacred history mentions little more than the number of their children. The next remarkable personage that occurs, is Samson, of whom many wonderful things are recorded. He was of the tribe of Dan, indued with vast bodily strength, which he exerted chiefly against the Philistines, whom God at that time let loose upon the Israelites in punishment of their sins. The birth of this extraordinary man had been foretold to his mother by an Angel, who acquainted her not only that she should have a son, who should be consecrated to God from his birth, and be the first to promote the delivery of Israel out of the hands of the Philistines; but that from the hour of his conception, she should moreover contribute towards his sanctification by abstaining from wine and strong drink, and all unclean meats. She informed her husband Manue of the Angel's apparition and message. Manue earnestly prayed, that he might be favoured with the like vision. His petition was granted, and in a second visit the Angel not only made himself visible to him, but moreover told him, that his son must also abstain from the same things, that he had mentioned to his wife. Manue begged his guest to let him dress a kid for his repast. The Angel refused to eat of his bread, saying that, if he chose to make a holocaust of his kid, he might offer it to the Lord. Manue laid the kid upon the rock, and set fire to it: as the flame arose the Angel ascended with it, and appeared to them no more. The child of promise was born soon after, and named Samson. Every direction, that God had given to his parents concerning his education, was religiously observed; his hair was not cut, neither wine nor any strong liquor did he drink: the child was blessed by God, and became the strongest of men. Being of a mature age, he fell in love with a Philistine woman, and begged his father's consent to marry her. His father

A. M. 2848. *Before J. C.* 1152.

ther had an abhorrence of the very name of a Philiſtine, and at firſt refuſed his conſent, not knowing that his ſon in that point acted under the immediate influence of God's holy Spirit. For Samſon was a figure of Jeſus Chriſt the *ſtrong*, the *wonderful*, who was one day to eſpouſe the Church of the Gentiles, after having been rejected by the Jews. Samſon by this alliance ſought every occaſion to chaſtiſe the Philiſtines for the many and grievous calamities they had brought upon the people of Iſrael. Being one day on his way to the town, where his intended ſpouſe reſided, he was met by a young lion, that came roaring with rage to devour him. Samſon without weapon or defence ruſhed forward by the impulſe of the holy Spirit, and laying hold of the lion tore him with as much eaſe, as he would have torn a kid in pieces. He threw the carcaſe aſide, and there left it. Some days after as he returned the ſame way, he ſtepped aſide to look at it, and behold a ſwarm of bees had ſettled and formed a honey-comb in the mouth of the dead lion. This ſingular circumſtance gave occaſion to a noted riddle, which Samſon propoſed to the thirty young Philiſtines, who were appointed to accompany him during the ſeven days ſolemniſation of his marriage with their countrywoman. He propoſed it in the following words: Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the ſtrong came forth ſweetneſs; and he promiſed to give each of them a ſuit of clothes, if they ſolved it within the ſeven days, upon condition they promiſed alſo on their part to pay him the like forfeit, if they failed. The condition was accepted of. They puzzled for three days about the riddle, but could not expound it: they then applied to the bride, telling her, ſhe muſt obtain a diſcovery of the ſecret from her huſband, or they would burn her and her father's houſe, if ſhe did not. She immediately employed all the female arts ſhe was capable of, to induce him to let her know what the riddle ſignified; ſhe wept and complained, ſhe careſſed and ſolicited, till on the ſeventh day ſhe prevailed upon him to expound the problem, which ſhe immediately communicated to her countrymen. They haſtened to Samſon

before

before the ſun went down, and ſaid, What is ſweeter than honey, and what is ſtronger than a lion? Samſon by the direction of Almighty God ſet off to Aſcalon, where he ſlew thirty Philiſtines, whom he ſtript and gave their garments, as a forfeit to the young men, who had declared the riddle.

The holy Fathers in their remarks upon the honey-comb, which Samſon found in the lion's mouth, take occaſion to ſpeak of that wonderful change, which Jeſus Chriſt wrought by his holy Spirit amongſt the Gentiles. Furious as a lion, the Pagan people once raged and threatened deſtruction to the Chriſtian Church, till being diſarmed by the power of Jeſus Chriſt, they ceaſed from acts of violence, and yielded to the force of truth. Softened into mildneſs by the doctrine and ſpirit of the Goſpel, they forgot their ſavage temper, and being regenerated in the waters of baptiſm, became the children of adoption, and were formed into one body of true believers under one and the ſame Head.

§ XXXVII. *Samſon's wonderful exploits. Judges* 15.

SAMSON being provoked at the perfidious behaviour of the Philiſtine youths, and grieved at the ſhameful treachery of his wife, abruptly left the houſe, and returned home. Her parents concluded from the manner of his going off, that he did not intend to return, and therefore married their daughter to another man. But contrary to their expectation Samſon returned ſome time after, and redemanded his wife. Her father made him excuſes for what he had done, and offered his youngeſt daughter in her ſtead. Neither his offer nor his excuſes were accepted of. Senſible of the injury he had received, Samſon publicly declared, that from that day he ſhould think himſelf warranted to do them all the miſchief he could in puniſhment of their crimes. His firſt attempt againſt them was of a very ſingular nature. He caught three hundred foxes, and tying them by the tail

A. M. 2867, *Before J. C.* 1138.

two and two together, with a lighted torch in the middle, he let them out into the vineyards and corn-fields, by which means the whole produce of the adjacent country was entirely deſtroyed. So extraordinary a contrivance of doing miſchief made the Philiſtines extremely curious to know the author and the motive of it. They diſcovered the author to be Samſon, and his motive the evil treatment, which he had received from his wife and father-in-law. Theſe then they looked upon as the real authors of their misfortune; againſt theſe they directed their revenge, and burnt them alive. Samſon, who by the Angel's expreſs declaration to his parents had been appointed to chaſtiſe the enemies of his country, was not yet ſatisfied. He performed ſuch ſingular feats of valour againſt the Philiſtines, and ſpread ſuch a terror amongſt them, that they raiſed an army to oppoſe him. The tribe of Juda was alarmed at their warlike preparations, and ſent to know of the Philiſtines what they meant. They received for anſwer, that nothing more was intended than the death of Samſon. The anſwer did not remove their fears. They thought a part of the ſtorm, when it was once raiſed, might poſſibly fall upon them, and concluded the beſt ſtep they could take, would be to prevent it, by delivering Samſon into their hands. Samſon had retreated into a cave in the rock of Etam. Thither they ſent three thouſand of their choiceſt men to ſecure him; yet ſuch was the awful fear they had of his mighty ſtrength, that they ſcarce dared to approach, much leſs lay their hands upon him. They told him the purport of their coming; they ſtood and remonſtrated to him the dreadful calamities, their whole nation might be expoſed to, from the provoked rage of a lawleſs people, who ruled over them; and as they ſolemnly promiſed upon oath not to take away his life, if he would only let them bind him, he peaceably yielded himſelf up into their hands, and willingly conſented to be their priſoner. They bound him with two new cords, and led him off towards the Philiſtines. The Philiſtines ſhouted with joy at the ſight, and began to think themſelves out of all danger from their formidable adverſary. Samſon

was at that moment ſtrongly moved by the Spirit of the Lord, and by a ſudden exertion of ſtrength burſt his bands aſunder with as much eaſe, as flax is conſumed by fire: then ſnatching up the jaw-bone of an aſs, that lay accidentally in his way, he ruſhed upon his enemies, and with that ſingle weapon ſlew a thouſand of them. The heat and vigour of his efforts brought on an exceſſive thirſt; he called upon God for relief in that extremity. God heard his prayer, and out of the dry bone drew a copious ſpring of water, with which he recruited his drooping vigour. Samſon returned his immediate thanks to God, and as a monument of his gratitude, gave to the place a name, which ſhould perpetuate the miracle to future ages.

To men full of that wiſdom, which is taught by a vain world, theſe facts may be a ſubject of profane wit and ridicule; but to the Saints, who guide their thoughts and actions by the Spirit of God's word, they furniſh matter of devout meditation. Spiritual matters come not within the reach of the ſenſual man's knowledge: he judges and he talks of the things of God only as they ſtrike his ſenſes, and accord with his worldly notions, while the humble Chriſtian meaſures them by the rule of faith, and conſiders them in the ſpirit of true piety. The great Saint Gregory ſpeaks of Samſon's victory over the Philiſtines, as a figurative repreſentation of that, which Jeſus Chriſt has ſince gained over the Pagan world. In his hand the patience and ſimplicity of a few fiſhermen has been more efficacious, than the bone of a dead animal was in the hand of Samſon: by that he defeated the wiſdom of philoſophers, by that he triumphed over the rage of inſulting tyrants, and put the powers of ſuperſtition and infidelity to flight. The humble ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt, being like him patient, and prepared to die with pleaſure in his ſervice, are ſince their death become a ſource of living waters, and the inſtruments of many flowing graces, which God by their interceſſion plenteouſly diffuſes thro' the whole Church.

§ XXXVIII. *The gates of Gaza. Judges* 16.

A. M. 2880. *Before J. C.* 1120. THE Philiſtines grew more active from diſappointment, and the late ſtroke they had received, did but whet their deſire of revenge. They ſcarce allowed Samſon any time to breathe; they narrowly obſerved all his motions, and diligently ſought every opportunity either to ſurpriſe or oppreſs him. They had watched him into the town of Gaza; ſecure as they thought of their prey, they in a very few hours collected a conſiderable number of men to ſurround him, and poſted a ſtrong guard at the town gates, watching there the whole night in ſilence, that in the morning they might kill him as he went out. Samſon in the mean time had laid himſelf down to reſt, thoughtleſs of the danger, that ſurrounded him. He ſlept till midnight, when being appriſed of his ſituation, he aroſe, haſtened to the town gates, and with one effort of his ſtrength tore them up with their poſts and bolts, threw them upon his ſhoulders, as trophies of triumph, and thus accoutred he marched intrepidly thro' the midſt of his enemies up the ſteep ſummit of the hill, that faces Hebron, with as much eaſe, as if he had walked upon a ſmooth plain diſencumbered from every weight. Struck with aſtoniſhment at ſuch a prodigy of ſtrength the guards ſtood motionleſs, and all Philiſthiim on the report were ſeized with ſuch panic, that they never after dared to oppoſe him with open force.

The lines of this ſurpriſing perſonage, ſays Saint Gregory, are too ſtrongly drawn not to diſcover at firſt ſight, whom they are deſigned to repreſent. It is the figure of Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, whom the Jews never ceaſed to perſecute, till they ſaw him dead, and conſigned to the tomb. There as he ſlept, the guards were placed around his ſepulchre to prevent his being taken away by ſurprize; when behold, during the ſilence of the night he victoriouſly roſe again to life, and by an unexpected, but moſt wonderful appearance, put the ſoldiers to flight, that had been placed to guard him. Triumphant over the

the malice of his enemies he broke down the bolts and bars of death, which he carried with him to the holy mountain of Olivet, and from thence aſcended into Heaven, ſetting open to his followers the gates of eternal life, which till that time had been ſhut by the ſin of our firſt parents againſt their unfortunate poſterity.

§ XXXIX. *Death of Samſon.* *Judges* 16.

HAPPY had it been for Samſon, if he had only ſhown as much reſolution againſt a falſe woman's charms, as he had ſtrength againſt lions and the armies of the Philiſtines. Dalila, by her allurements and treacherous careſſes proved the ruin of a man, whom the united force of men had not been able to hurt. She dwelt in the vale of Sorec, and is thought by many to have been his wife. The Philiſtines obſerving how fond Samſon ſeemed to be of her, promiſed her a conſiderable recompenſe, if ſhe could only learn and diſcover to them the ſecret of his ſtrength. Dalila, like many of her ſex, being influenced by the love of gain, began to try her art to deceive and betray the man, who loved her. She propoſed her malicious queſtions, which Samſon prudently defeated by his deluſive anſwers; he told her, that to make him as weak as other men, ſhe had but to tie him with ſeven wet or with nine new cords, or to faſten him by ſeven hairs of his head. She tried them all one after another, and found herſelf as often diſappointed. She thereupon became more and more preſſing, and continually hung upon him for many days; ſhe reproached, and flattered, ſhe threatened, and careſſed by turns, till his ſoul fainted away, and was wearied even unto death: then opening the truth, he ſaid to her, that being a Nazarite, that is, a perſon conſecrated to God from his infancy, the ſciſſars had never come near his head, and that his ſtrength depended upon his hair. The treacherous woman gave immediate notice to the princes of the Philiſtines, and invited them to come, as Samſon had at laſt opened his *A. M.* 2885, *Before J. C.* 1115.

heart

heart to her. She compoſed him to ſleep, called a barber, and ſhaved him both of his hair and ſtrength at once. Samſon awoke from ſleep, little caring, as he ſeemed, about the preſence of his enemies, but thought he would go out, as he did before, & ſhake himſelf, not knowing, as the Scripture ſays, that the Lord had departed from him. The Philiſtines ſeized him, and forthwith putting out his eyes, led him bound in chains to Gaza, and ſhut him up to grind in a mill. To that diſgraceful drudgery Samſon was confined, bereft of his ſight, and the ſolaces of life. During his confinement his hair began to grow, and as his hair increaſed, his ſtrength alſo gradually returned. The lords of the Philiſtines had at that time aſſembled to celebrate the feaſt of their god Dagon; their place of entertainment was a large hall, whither they ordered Samſon to be brought, that he might play before them. Samſon was therefore brought out of priſon, and made to play for the diverſion of his inſulting enemies. He deſired the boy, who guided his ſteps, to let him reſt againſt the pillars, that ſupported the houſe. There calling upon the Lord to reſtore him his former ſtrength, and deſiring to die with the Philiſtines, he took hold of one pillar with his right hand, and the other with his left, and ſhook them violently together, till the whole edifice fell down, and cruſhed him with three thouſand of the Philiſtines under its ruins.

Samſon's death, which was ſeverely felt by the enemies of his God and country, is according to the holy Fathers, an emblem of that great overthrow, which Jeſus Chriſt by his death gave to the infernal powers. For then it was, ſays St. Paulinus, that the temple of Satan was pulled down, and the pride of his bold aſſociates humbled to the duſt. But it is not to the figurative ſenſe only, that the Fathers confine their remarks upon this hiſtory. They deplore the misfortune of an invincible hero, who notwithſtanding his prodigious ſtrength, was at laſt conquered by a woman. By a woman's power he became not only weak, but likewiſe blind, and was condemned, like a beaſt, to grind in a mill. His misfortune

ture gives us the ſtriking likeneſs of a ſinner, who being ſtript of his inherent virtues, and deprived of the lights of the Holy Ghoſt, becomes abandoned to his pleaſures, and enſlaved to the pomps of a wicked world: groaning under the tyranny of his paſſions, he toils and frets in the purſuit of what only tends to feed his deſires, and increaſe his troubles. A ſinner in this ſtate has no other remedy, than to raiſe his voice with Samſon, and to pray, that his former ſtrength may be reſtored to him. It is by repentance only, ſays the ſame Saint Paulinus, that the ſoul can recover her loſt virtues, and triumph over the enemies of her ſalvation: by that ſhe regains her firſt ſtrength, by that ſhe deſtroys the works of Satan, by that ſhe dies to ſin and ſelf-love, that ſhe may henceforward live to God alone.

§ XL. *Death of the Levite's wife. Judges* 19.

IN the two laſt chapters of the book of Judges is related a fact, which is commonly thought to have happened ſoon after the death of Joſue. A certain Levite, who dwelt in mount Ephraim, had married a woman of the town of Bethlehem; upon ſome diſagreement between them, they ſeparated, and the woman returned home to her parents. The Levite ſtill retained an affection for his wife, and at the end of four months went over to Bethlehem with an intention of propoſing a reconciliation, and of taking her back. His father-in-law received him with great cordiality, and his wife forgetting all, that had paſſed between them, expreſſed the tendereſt affection for her huſband. The friendly civilities, he there met with, made him prolong his ſtay a day or two more, than he had intended. He at laſt took leave, and ſet off upon his return in the company of his wife and a man ſervant. About ſun-ſet they arrived at Gaba, a town belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, where they propoſed to paſs the night. They remained for ſome time in the ſtreet, before any one would offer them

A. M. 2570, *Before J. C.* 1430.

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a lodging. At last an hospitable old man, who was also from mount Ephraim, coming home after his day's work, perceived the Levite and his wife in the street, and in a friendly manner invited them to his house. After a frugal supper they retired to rest, when some of the riotous townsmen beset the house, and demanded the stranger, with a lewd intent to abuse him. The hospitable old man used every argument to reduce them to reason; but arguments were lost on men, who were burning with lawless passion: both he and his guest grew terrified at their threats, and to stop their cries abandoned the Levite's wife to their discretion. The wicked wretches committed such brutish violences upon her the whole night, that she was but just able next morning to crawl back to her husband's lodgings. She had scarce reached the door, when she dropt down dead with her arms extended upon the ground, demanding vengeance, as it were, for the outrage she had suffered. The Levite rose, when it was light, opened the door, and finding his wife in that posture, thought she was only taking her rest, and said to her, Arise and let us be going: but, as she made no answer, perceiving she was dead, he took her up, laid her upon his ass, and returned to his house, meditating revenge against the whole tribe of Benjamin, as accessary to her death. As soon as he was come home, he took a sword, and divided the dead body of his wife with her bones into twelve parts, which he distributed thro' the different tribes of Israel. All were shocked with horror at the crime of Benjamin, and unanimously agreed to concur in washing out a stain, that had disgraced the whole Hebrew nation.

Saint Ambrose admires the unanimity and extolls the zeal, that animated the Israelites on this occasion; they resolved to see justice done to an injured man, and reparation made to the sanctity of the law, which had been so enormously violated. An outrage done to the marriage bed, says that holy Father, put them all into a flame: a single tribe had committed the crime, and they all agreed in their resolves to punish it. To re-

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main inactive was in their opinion to approve the fact, and to become partners of the guilt. They were afraid, leſt the tacit diſſimulation of ſo atrocious an offence might make the other tribes liable to the bolts of God's wrath, which one of them had ſo juſtly merited. The holy Doctor expreſſes great concern at the corruption of morals, that reigned in his time; he deplores the many infidelities, that were committed againſt the ſanctity of marriage in contempt of God's law; he arraigns the ſhameful licentiouſneſs of thoſe, who not only plunge into vice themſelves, but alſo encourage it in others, who never exert their influence or authority to condemn or correct, but as intereſt or paſſion guides. To ſuch degenerate Chriſtians he propoſes that example of the Iſraelites, who being actuated by a laudable zeal for public juſtice, reſolved upon the moſt vigorous meaſures to chaſtiſe the delinquents, and put a ſtop to vice. They were influenced by no reſpect of perſons, nor miſled by any falſe compaſſion either to palliate or excuſe notorious guilt at the expenſe of injured innocence.

§ XLI. *Puniſhment of the Benjamites. Judges 20.*

THE Iſraelites having appointed *A. M. 2870.* Maſpha for the place of general *Before J. C. 1130.* rendezvous, the injured Levite there appeared, and renewed his complaint againſt the Benjamites. His ſtory roused an honeſt indignation in the breaſts of all; they reſolved to ſee juſtice done in a point, which concerned the community, they drew together a numerous army to ſupport their reſolves againſt any reſiſtance, that the Benjamites might make, and God himſelf named the general to command the troops. Before they proceeded to acts of violence, they tried by deputies to make their unhappy brethren ſenſible of their crime, and to prevail upon them to deliver up the perpetrators of it, that they might be puniſhed, as the Law directed. The Benjamites not only refuſed to make any

satisfaction for the injury, they had done, but declared themselves the protectors of their friends and fellow citizens. They raised an army of five and twenty thousand men, and a civil war was unhappily commenced. The Israelites advanced with great confidence to give them battle, in which they had the misfortune to lose two and twenty thousand of their best troops. They were surprised, but not dejected at their unexpected overthrow; they prepared for a second battle; with tears in their eyes they begged the Lord of Hosts to give a blessing to their arms: but victory still declared against them; they were routed a second time with the slaughter of eighteen thousand men. The Israelites began to be alarmed; to meet with two such bloody defeats in a war so just on their side, and where the numbers were so greatly in their favour, seemed unaccountable. In this unhappy state of affairs they had recourse to God; they went in procession to the Tabernacle, which had been set up in Silo, a city of the tribe of Ephraim; there they sat and wept before the Lord; they fasted, they prayed, and begged to know, whether it was his will, that they should still proceed against the Benjamites. Phinees the grandson of Aaron was High-priest at that time, and by his mouth God declared to the Israelites, that they should go for the third time against Benjamin, and gain a complete victory. Upon this assurance the confederate tribes marched against the town of Gabaa. The Benjamites rushed out intrepidly to meet them, not doubting but they should beat them back with the same slaughter, as they had done twice before. To confirm them in their rash opinion the Israelites designedly gave way, and drew them off to some distance. They then faced about, and at the same time, a body of their troops, which had been placed in ambuscade near the town, rushed out upon the enemies rear. The Benjamites were now hemmed in between two armies; which ever way they turned, they met with an implacable enemy, they received no quarter, and were all cut off to a man. The conquerors set fire to their towns and villages, laid every thing waste before them, and the massa-

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cre was ſo univerſal, that of the whole tribe of Benjamin only ſix hundred men eſcaped by flying into the deſert. The Iſraelites ſeemed fully bent upon the total ruin of that unhappy tribe: for in the warmth of their reſentment they bound themſelves by oath not to marry their daughters to any of the miſerable ſurvivors. When the heat of paſſion was over, they began upon more cool reflection to be ſorry for what they had done, and inſtead of rejoicing were extremely grieved at a victory, which had nearly extinguiſhed one of their tribes. They wiſhed to ſee the loſs repaired: the town of Jabes Galaad furniſhed them with the means. The inhabitants of that town had been deficient in their duty during the late war. By general agreement it was reſolved to puniſh them on that account. An army of ten thouſand men was accordingly ſent to put them all to the ſword, excepting the young virgins, who were reſerved and given in marriage to the ſurviving Benjamites.

Wonderful is the conduct of divine Providence thro' this whole affair. No war in appearance was ever more warrantably undertaken; it had the approbation of God himſelf, and yet was very unſucceſsful in the two firſt engagements. By that, ſays Saint Gregory, Almighty God would ſignify to us, how exempt from ſin they ought to be, who undertake to puniſh it in others. Prepoſterous is the attempt to call our brethren to an account for faults, which we encourage by example. However great may be the provocation, and however juſt the cauſe to puniſh, the weapons of ſeverity are not to be taken up, but with the greateſt caution, and always with regret. The ſevere puniſhment, inflicted on the guilty Benjamites, as we have ſeen, became a ſubject of real ſorrow to thoſe, by whom it had been inflicted. The generous Iſraelites were grieved to ſee a kindred tribe reduced ſo low; they wept to think that they had been the unhappy inſtruments of ſuch ſeverity; they had no ſooner ſtruck the fatal blow, than they repented, and turned their thoughts upon the means of repairing, what they had endeavoured to deſtroy. It would be ſhameful, as the holy Fathers obſerve, for Chriſtians

in point of charity to be outdone by Jews, to be less tender of their neighbour's interest, to show less feeling, or to be less compassionate for a brother's sufferings.

§ XLII. *Ruth follows Noomi. Ruth* 2.

A. M. 2708, *or thereabout.* THE short, but interesting story of Ruth happened under the Judges, and makes a book of itself. The sacred writer tells us, that at a time, when the land of Israel was sorely vexed by famine, a certain man, by name Elimelech, of the town of Bethlehem, retired with Noemi his wife and two sons, into the country of the Moabites, not to starve in his own. After his death Noemi married her two sons to two young women of that country, whose names were Orpha and Ruth. They lived ten years together, but no issue came from either of the two marriages: the two brothers died, and left their disconsolate mother in a childless widowhood. Having no consolation to expect in the land of Moab, Noemi resolved to return into her own country, where the famine was no longer felt. She communicated her design to Orpha and Ruth; they both desired to accompany her to Bethlehem. She begged they would not think of accompanying a friendless widow, from whom they had neither fortune nor comfort to expect, but return to their relations, from whom they might meet with both: she represented to them, that by going along with her they would but throw themselves into fresh miseries, that her present distress was sufficient without any other addition, that to see them suffer on her account would increase her pain, and that their sufferings would be more afflicting to her, than her own. Orpha yielded to Noomi's reasons, tenderly embraced her, and returned to Moab. Ruth was too much attached to her mother-in-law to think of leaving her; with the greatest eagerness she begged, that they might be never separated from each other: I will accompany you, said she, where ever you shall go, and with you I will for ever dwell; your peo-

ple shall be my people, and your God shall be mine; in the same land with you I will live and die, and nothing but death shall ever part us. Noemi could not refuse so affectionate and so resolute a request; she consented to Ruth's going with her, and they both came to Bethlehem. It was then harvest time, and Ruth desired leave of her mother to go into the neighbouring fields, where she might glean some small relief in their scanty circumstances. Kind providence conducted her into a field belonging to Booz, a near relation of Elimelech, Noemi's former husband. Her remarkable diligence drew the eyes of the reapers, and Booz from the favourable account, he had received from his overseer, of Ruth's dutiful behaviour to her mother, and of her diligence at work, ordered every kindness and civility to be shown her. He bade his reapers scatter the corn on purpose, and leave Ruth a sufficient quantity to requite her amply for the pains she took; if she should be willing to reap, he told them not to hinder her, and insisted upon her eating and drinking with his servants.

This goodness of Booz to Ruth has been considered by the holy Fathers, as an emblem of that, which Jesus Christ has since shown to his Church. Booz did not disdain to take notice of a poor stranger; neither the present meanness of her appearance, nor the past errors of her religious sentiments, excluded her from the acts of his humanity. Ruth's steady attachment to Noemi is an example of that unshaken fidelity, which every Christian owes to Jesus Christ and his Church. He, that loves his father, mother, or his kindred, more than me, says our blessed Saviour, is not worthy of me. Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and so follow me. If in following Jesus Christ worldly advantages must be sometimes given up, and hardships undergone, an upright mind and a peaceful conscience will confer an inward satisfaction, which without virtue, no riches can purchase, and no power bestow. Noemi's poverty was to Ruth of more advantage, than all the wealth of Moab; and they, who by a firm and generous attachment stand steady to the principles of duty,

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will also receive their reward in the end. They may suffer, they may be oppressed for a time; the hour of their delivery hastens on, an eternity of joys is already prepared to console their pains, and to crown their patience.

§ XLIII. *Booz espouses Ruth.* *Ruth* 3.

A. M. 2708, *Before J. C.* 1292. NOEMI being encouraged by these first favours, that Booz had shown to her daughter-in-law, began to think of procuring her something more, and of providing her with a settlement for life. She told her, that Booz was her near kinsman, and according to the Mosaic law ought to be her husband. Wash thyself therefore, said she, and anoint thee, and put on thy best garments, and go down to the place, where he is winnowing his barley: but let the man not see thee, till he shall have done eating and drinking. Mark the place, when he retires to sleep; go in, lay thyself down at his feet, and he will tell thee, what thou hast to do. In obedience to Noemi's commands, Ruth punctually performed, what she otherwise never durst have thought of. Booz woke in the night, and being surprised to find a woman lying at his feet asked, Who she was, and what she meant? Ruth gave him a direct answer, expressing her name and her pretensions to him. Booz immediately acknowledged the affinity, there was between them, and commended her conduct in the step she had taken; he praised her for her prudence in not following the young men either rich or poor, and promised to marry her, if the man, who was nearer a-kin, than he, should refuse her. Sleep till the morning, said he; then, rise, and go cautiously away, before it is light enough for any man to see or know, that thou camest hither. Towards the dawn of day Booz arose, and gave her six measures of barley to carry to her mother in law, then went and seated himself near the town gate, where public justice was administered according to the custom of those days. There seeing his kinsman

kinſman paſs by, he called him by his name, and explained to him Ruth's affair in the preſence of ten reſpectable witneſſes. He told him, that Noemi, the widow of their deceaſed brother Elimelech, had a ſhare in a certain field, which ſhe was willing to ſell, and that it was his right in the firſt place either to take or refuſe the purchaſe. The man ſaid, he would take it; then replied Booz, you muſt take alſo the widow, and raiſe up the name of thy kinſman in his inheritance. The man made anſwer, that he would rather chuſe to forego his right, and yield up his privilege to Booz. Booz accepted the offer, and the deed of ceſſion being immediately made according to the eſtabliſhed form, he publicly eſpouſed Ruth, and received the good wiſhes of all preſent upon the occaſion. They wiſhed him every bleſſing, that can attend a happy marriage; they prayed, that this young woman might prove as great a happineſs to his family, as Rachel and Lia had been to that of Jacob; that ſhe might be an example of virtue in Ephrata, and have a famous name in Bethlehem.

The iſſue of this marriage was a ſon, called Obed, the father of Iſai, and grandfather of David. Noemi was looked upon as one of the moſt fortunate of her ſex, and as completely bleſt in her daughter-in-law, as ſhe could have been in a numerous offspring of her own. Fond to exceſs of the little Obed, ſhe united the diligence of a nurſe with the tender affections of a mother.

In this extraordinary hiſtory of Ruth, ſays Saint Ambroſe, we ſee the qualifications, that God chiefly regards in the choice he makes of his friends; he is not determined by the nobility of their birth, nor even by the ſanctity of their anceſtors; he conſiders their perſonal virtues, and views the diſpoſition of their own hearts. A daughter of the Moabites, born of idolatrous parents, was in reward of her piety raiſed to the greateſt honour, which was then upon earth, the honour of being ranked in the genealogy of the Meſſias, and becoming one of the progenitors of Jeſus Chriſt according to the fleſh. Her example, ſays the ſame Saint, is a leſſon for us not to rely upon the bare ſhow and nominal profeſſion of a Chriſtian,

Christian, as if nothing more were exacted of us. Such once was the infatuation of the Jews, who solely trusted to their carnal sacrifices, and vainly gloried in the name of Abraham, as if that alone had been sufficient for their justification. Without faith working by charity in the performance of our Christian duties, we can never please God, nor become worthy of the chaste nuptials of Jesus Christ in his glory.

§ XLIV. *Samuel under the care of Heli.* 1 *Kings* i.

A. M. 2848, *Before J. C.* 1152.

SAMUEL, a renowned and holy prophet, was from his infancy trained up to virtue. Anna his mother had for many years been married to Elcana, without having any children. Overwhelmed with the excess of sorrow, she wept and prayed to God for comfort in her affliction; she joined fasting to her prayers, and bound herself by vow, if she should obtain a son, to consecrate him all the days of his life to the divine service. Samuel was the fruit of his mother's piety, and the recompense of her faith. In a son like him, says Saint Chrysostom, Anna became more happy, than if she had been mother of the greatest prince upon earth. She received him, as a present from the hand of God, and in compliance with her vow hastened to give him back by a solemn act of religion. As soon as she had weaned him, she carried him to the Tabernacle, put him into the hands of Heli the High-priest, and consecrated him irrevocably, as she had promised, to the service of her Creator. Gratitude and piety alone guided the tender feelings of her love; she parted with her child at a time, when the charms and smiles of innocence made him the more dear. She knew what was good for her son, and what acceptable to God. Her sacrifice in some sort seems to resemble that of Abraham. She offered to God her darling, her only son; she offered him for life, and stript herself of all future claim over him. The mother's piety was repaid by the virtues of her son. The little Samuel ministered to

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the Lord under Heli's direction by day, and at night ſlept within the Tabernacle near the Ark of God; and there it was, that God favoured him with a ſpecial revelation, the preparatory mark of his future greatneſs. During the ſilence of the night he heard a voice calling him by his name; unſkilled as yet in the language of the Lord, the holy youth thought it had been Heli's voice, haſtily roſe, and aſked him, what he wanted. Heli told him, he had not called, bade him go and compoſe himſelf to ſleep. Samuel had ſcarce laid himſelf down, when the ſame voice called him up again; he ran to the High-prieſt, who ordered him to return & ſleep. Samuel was called a third time, and Heli then knew it to be the Lord, who had called the youth. Go, ſleep, ſaid he to him; and if thou hear the voice again, thou ſhalt anſwer, Speak, Lord, for thy ſervant heareth. Samuel retired to take his reſt, and upon hearing himſelf called by name for the fourth time, anſwered in the words, that Heli had commanded him. The Lord then informed Samuel of the heavy judgments, which were ſoon to fall upon the High-prieſt and his family, in puniſhment of ſins, that were too enormous to be expiated by the ſacrifices, they offered. He declared, that he could no longer bear the ſinful negligence of a father, who knowing the diſorders, and ſeeing the profane exceſſes of his two ſons, had contented himſelf with a gentle reprimand, when a juſt zeal for the honour and ſanctity of God's altar required the moſt exemplary ſeverity. Heli was very preſſing next morning to know, what the Lord had ſaid. Samuel ſhowed a great unwillingneſs to ſpeak, and nothing but Heli's importunity could have prevailed upon him to impart the melancholy ſecret. Heli humbly ſubmitted to the divine decrees, and with the deepeſt regret for his paſt miſconduct became ſenſible, that to fulfil the duties of a father, it was not enough to be ſingly good, that he moreover ought to have endeavoured to inſtill goodneſs into his children: he acknowledged his neglect, and reſigned himſelf to the puniſhment thereof.

Heli,

Heli, says Saint Gregory, has many imitators both in the Church and private families. Pastors silently behold the disorders of their flock, which they ought to correct, and parents, either from indolence or false fondness, suffer those passions to grow up in their children, which ought to have been checked at their first appearance. Such a neglect tends to the ruin of their souls, and draws down God's displeasure both upon themselves and children.

§ XLV. *Heli's punishment.* 1 *Kings* 4.

A. M. 2888, *Before J. C.* 1112. THE sins of the Hebrew nation were swelled to a great heigth, and the Philistines were the people, whom God had chosen to be their scourge. Equally destitute of divine favours, as of public virtues, the Israelites were torn to pieces by a calamitous war, their armies put to flight, and their country plundered. In times of public calamity they had often humbled themselves under the hand of God, and by repentance recovered his former friendship. But now they only thought of carrying the Ark into the camp, as if they meant to force Almighty God to their assistance, or to let the most sacred emblem of their religion become a prey to their enemies. Almighty God, whose sanctity is not to be sported with, and whose justice is not to be controled by the sham of religion, saw the Ark advance, but was not on that account the more propitiously inclined towards his people. The two sons of Heli, Ophni and Phinees, attended the procession to their ruin: for such attendants were more likely to hasten, than the Ark was to stop the stroke, that God had prepared for the punishment of sinners. When they reached the camp, the army gave an universal shout of joy, and new courage seemed to animate the drooping Israelites. The Philistines on the other hand grew dejected, and dreaded the mighty arm of the high God of Israel. But when their first alarms had subsided, they began to encourage one another, resumed their former

mer vigour, and ruſhed out to battle with ſuch impetuoſity, that they bore down all before them. Ophni and Phinees were killed, with thirty thouſand of the common men; the reſt ſaved themſelves by a ſhameful flight, and left the Ark in the hands of the Philiſtines. Heli in the mean time, whoſe ſightleſs and decrepit age rendered him a moving object of compaſſion, had ſeated himſelf before the door of his houſe facing the high way, and was waiting with impatience to hear the event: his fears foreboded no good, his troubled heart beat with anxiety for the Ark of God. A Benjamite, who had eſcaped from the field of battle, paſſed by and told him, that the Iſraelites were routed with great ſlaughter, that his two ſons, Ophni and Phinees, were amongſt the ſlain, and the Ark taken by the enemy. At the mention of the Ark the poor old man fell backwards from his ſeat, broke his neck and died upon the ſpot.

From ſuch viſible ſtrokes of divine juſtice it appears, how ſeverely God puniſhes an abuſe of holy things, and how grievouſly he is provoked at the ſins of thoſe, who by a purity of manners, conformable to the ſanctity of their character, ought to ſtay the arm, that is lifted up to chaſtiſe the ſins of others. By the capture of the Ark we ſee, that it is not merely in the name, or in the holineſs of a thing, that we are to truſt for the divine protection; we muſt by the integrity of our lives make ourſelves worthy of thoſe graces, which he has annexed to a right uſe of his holy inſtitutions. God takes under his ſpecial protection none but thoſe, who deſerve it by their virtues, and honour him by their actions.

§ XLVI. *Idol of Dagon.* 1 *Kings* 5.

ALTHO' the Ark of God ſeemed to be fallen into a ſtate of diſgrace, and ſtript of thoſe honours, which had hitherto ſurrounded it, yet never did its glory appear with greater luſtre, than while it remained amongſt the Philiſtines. It was carried from the field of battle into

A. M. 2888. *Before J. C.* 1112.

the town of Azotus, and placed in the temple of Dagon. This is an emblem of every ſacrilegeous attempt, that is made to ſet up the worſhip of God, and the worſhip of devils in the ſame heart. But God admits of no rival in his ſervice: being but One, the ſupreme and ſovereign Lord of all things, he will not give his glory to another: Dagon was not permitted to ſtand before the Ark. Thrown by divine power down to the ground, it lay flat upon its face, and in that diſgraceful poſture was found by the Azotians, when they entered the temple next morning. With great concern they lifted up the helpleſs log, and put it back to the place, from whence it had fallen. Dagon was as little able to preſerve his ſtation a ſecond time, as he had been the firſt. He was found the next day not only flat upon the floor, but alſo clipt of his hands and head, which were broken off, and lay at ſome diſtance from the trunk. The arm of God then extended itſelf from the idol to the idolaters themſelves. The inhabitants of Azotus were ſuddenly ſtruck with a painful ſore, which hindered them from ſitting down, while ſwarms of mice over-ran and deſtroyed the country. The miſerable Azotians ſaw, there was ſomething more than natural in theſe chaſtiſements, and that the inſult offered to the Ark, was undoubtedly the cauſe. Being no longer able to bear the avenging hand of God, which lay ſo heavy on them, they took the reſolution of ſending away the Ark into ſome other town within their territories. They removed it from one town to another; but wherever they went, they carried with it the ſcourge of God upon the inhabitants. The whole country was in the deepeſt conſternation; a general fear prevailed, that the Ark would be the deſtruction of them all, if it remained much longer amongſt them. They conſulted their ſoothſayers and wiſe men upon the ſubject, and by their advice agreed to ſend it back to the Iſraelites, and to accompany it with preſents, as an atonement for the ſin, they had committed againſt the God of Iſrael. Therefore, according to the number of their provinces, they ordered five golden figures of one ſort, and five of another, repreſenting the two ſorts of plagues, they had

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been scourged with, to be prepared and placed in a casket by the side of the Ark, as soon as the carriage was ready to convey it away.

Thus were the proud Philistines humbled; thus by a standing monument of their own weakness they acknowledged the power of the God, who stands in need of no human assistance to triumph over his most obstinate enemies. The joy they felt at seeing themselves masters of the Ark, was quickly changed into mourning, and the evils, that succeeded, filled them with the apprehension of a scourge still more dreadful. Such is the troubled state of every guilty conscience. The joy of iniquity is but short; the pleasure of sin is either extinguished by succeeding pain, or imbittered by remorse. If the sinner remains insensible of the temporal punishments, by which God admonishes him of his duty, he then with reason may apprehend those greater punishments, which await the impenitent in another world.

§ XLVII. *The Ark sent back.* 1 *Kings* 6.

IN consequence of the resolution taken to send back the Ark, the Philistines had ordered a new wain to be made for the purpose, and two kine, that had lately calved, to be ready to draw it. The Ark was laid upon the carriage, and the little casket, containing the ten golden figures mentioned above, stood by the side of it: the kine were yoked to, and left to take their way. The Philistines, had carefully shut up the calves, and agreed, that the motion of their dams should determine, what judgment they had to form of the calamities they had felt, since the Ark had been amongst them. If contrary to their natural instinct the kine should go streight on towards the Hebrew territories, they then should conclude, that the scourge had been from God; but if not, they in that case should take it as a sign, that nothing had happened, but by mere chance. God in this instance condescended to the weakness of those idolaters, *A. M.* 2888. *Before J. C.* 1112.

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and by his ſpecial providence directed the kine towards the confines of Iſrael. They went forward with one continued pace; inſtinct indeed made them low after their young, but it neither ſtopt nor turned them out of their way. With the like ſteadineſs ought every Chriſtian to purſue his way to heaven, being neither drawn aſide by paſſion, nor retarded by terrene affection. The Philiſtine chiefs, full of aſtoniſhment, followed the Ark, as far as Bethſames, which was the firſt town in the Hebrew dominions, and there for the firſt time the kine ſtopt of their own accord. The Bethſamites were filled with joy at the ſight of the Ark, the loſs of which for ſeven months had caſt all Iſrael into the deepeſt mourning. But their joy was ſoon changed into tears; they wept under the ſame avenging rod, which had ſo ſeverely chaſtiſed the Philiſtines. A prodigious croud of people had aſſembled at the place: it was not a zeal for God's honour, it was an eager curioſity to behold and look into the Ark, which had drawn them together; and on that account more than fifty thouſand of them were ſtruck with ſudden death. The dreadful ſtroke made the ſurvivors tremble; they had now learnt a due reſpect for the ſanctity of the Ark, but were afraid of the conſequences, which its ſtay might cauſe amongſt them. They informed the citizens of Cariathiarim, that the Ark was arrived from the Philiſtines, and begged they would come and fetch it from Bethſames. The men of Cariathiarim came accordingly, and reſpectfully carried off the Ark to Gabaa, where it was depoſited in the houſe of Abinadab. Being in the place where God was pleaſed it ſhould remain, the Ark was no longer the cauſe of any ſuch calamities, that had fallen ſo heavily upon the Philiſtines and Bethſamites; but became an inſtrument of many bleſſings, that flowed in upon the whole country.

Our bleſſed Redeemer, who was prefigured by the Ark, deſires nothing more than to ſhower down his graces upon mankind: the more liberal he is of his favours, the more he is provoked by the ingratitude of thoſe, who either deſpiſe or abuſe them. The Bethſamites ſeemed in ſome ſort to honour the Ark by the joy, they ſhowed

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at its being brought amongſt them; but their joy aroſe from a wrong motive. Their own, not God's honour was the object of their joy: their pride was flattered to ſee themſelves poſſeſſed again of the Ark, while the obſervance of the Law, that was contained within it, made no part of their concern. With the like indiſcretion, ſays Saint Gregory, many Chriſtians preſumptuouſly approach the Body of our Lord in his holy Sacrament, and ſo periſh in the preſence of the Holy of Holies. Full of ſpiritual pride they go to the holy table without being duly prepared; with an unworthy diſpoſition of ſoul they receive the immaculate Lamb of God, and thereby incur the guilt of everlaſting death at the ſacred ſource of life itſelf.

§ XLVIII. *Defeat of the Philiſtines.* 1 *Kings* 7.

AFTER the Ark was recovered out of the hands of the Philiſtines, the ſtate of affairs in Iſrael began to wear a more pleaſing aſpect. The Iſraelites had been humbled into a ſenſe of their duty; God relented in his wrath; Samuel, a faithful prieſt and prophet was appointed to judge & govern the nation; & no pledge more expreſſive of his friendſhip did God ever give to his people, than by giving them ſo able and ſo ſage a leader. Actuated with a true zeal for God's honour and the nation's good, Samuel began by exhorting the people to a real converſion of their hearts from vice. He repreſented to them the infidelity of their paſt conduct, the enormity of their idolatries and the neceſſity of doing penance: he promiſed them on the part of God not only pardon of their ſins, but alſo victory over their enemies, if they would deſtroy their idols, and adore the only true and ſupreme Lord of heaven and earth. The people heard him with attention, they were moved, they promiſed to do better, they in effect began by demoliſhing the idols of Baal and Aſtaroth. Upon thoſe marks of repentance Samuel appointed them to meet him at Maſphat, a town in

A. M. 2888, *Before J. C.* 1112.

in the tribe of Juda, where he would pray for them. They obeyed his ſummons on the day he mentioned, which was a day of faſting and humiliation; they appeared in the garb of true penitents, they confeſſed their crimes, they bowed themſelves down in prayer before God, they implored forgiveneſs, and conjured the Lord to accept the holocauſt, which Samuel his faithful Prophet was going to offer for them. In the midſt of theſe religious exerciſes they were ſuddenly informed, that the Philiſtine army was in full march againſt them. The very name of an enemy, from whom they had received ſo many defeats, alarmed and terrified them, they earneſtly intreated Samuel to redouble his prayers, on which their ſafety depended. The Philiſtines in effect having been informed, that the Iſraelites were aſſembled at Maſphat, thought it a fair opportunity to cut off the whole nation at a ſtroke: accuſtomed to ſucceſs, which they had vainly attributed to themſelves, they marched on as to a certain victory, little thinking that the God, on whom all things depend, was now reconciled with his people. Samuel was offering the ſacrifice, the Philiſtines came up and began to attack. At that moment loud claps of thunder rolled from the ſeat of God, which ſpread ſuch a terror thro' the Philiſtine army, that they immediately turned their backs, and fled off in the utmoſt confuſion. The Iſraelites vigorouſly purſued, and gained a complete victory. Fortune from that day declared in favour of the Iſraelites; they recovered all the towns, they had loſt, and as long as Samuel was at their head, neither the Philiſtines nor any other enemy durſt moleſt them in the field. Peace was reſtored, public virtues flouriſhed, and Samuel for twenty years governed the Hebrew nation with prudence and the affections of a father. But as he advanced in years, the glory of this pleaſing proſpect gradually declined. Infirmity of age had made him unequal to the weighty charge; he communicated a ſhare of his authority to his ſons, but the ſons had no ſhare of their father's virtues. Avarice and ſelf-intereſt preſided at the councils of theſe young men, and directed their deciſions in the adminiſtration of juſtice.

tice. This conduct of Samuel's ſons gave the Iſraelites too plauſible a pretext for propoſing a change in their form of government. They wiſhed to ſee themſelves governed by a king, like other nations. The name and pageantry of a king pleaſed and flattered them; they petitioned Samuel to give them a king. Samuel, who fancied, that this extraordinary petition aroſe from ſome perſonal diſlike, they had conceived againſt him, made his complaint to God. It is not with thee, replied Almighty God, it is with me, that they are diſſatisfied; not thee, but me they have rejected; they chuſe not, that I ſhould reign any longer over them. Explain to them the rights and great power of the king, they aſk for, and if they ſtill inſiſt upon it, grant them their requeſt. The holy prophet made his report to the people, & they choſe to have a king over them like other nations.

We wonder, ſay the holy Fathers, how the Iſraelites could prefer the government of man to that of God; & yet we expreſs no concern at the conduct of Chriſtians, who chuſe the prince of darkneſs for their king and leader in preference to Jeſus Chriſt. Tho' they are his members, and he their head, with the Jews they cry, We will not have him to reign over us; while to the infernal tyrant they ſay, if not in words, at leaſt in effect, Thou art our king, and we thy ſubjects: we no longer make a part of the fellowſhip of Chriſt, we neither reſpect his counſels, nor obey his commands: our own will is the law we follow; we admit of no reſtraint, but ſuch as we chuſe to ſubmit to. Such is the language expreſſed in the lawleſs conduct of many Chriſtians now a days.

§ XLIX. *Saul anointed King.* 1 *Kings* 8.

ALMIGHTY God having conſented to the requeſt, that his people had made of being governed by a king, made choice of Saul in the following manner. Cis, of the tribe of Benjamin, having loſt his aſſes, ſent his ſon *A. M.* 2909, *Before J. C.* 1091.

Saul

Saul to look for them. Saul wandered for ſome time about the country from place to place without receiving any intelligence. Deſpairing of ſucceſs, and being anxious, leſt his father might grow uneaſy at his ſtay, he thought of returning home, when his ſervant adviſed him to go to Samuel, the man of God, who had the gift of ſeeing and reſolving the doubts of thoſe, who went to conſult him. The holy prophet by divine revelation had learnt, that Saul was the man, deſtined by Almighty God to be the firſt king of Iſrael; he therefore received him into his houſe with greater reſpect, than is uſually paid to a common ſtranger; he entertained him very hoſpitably, and kept him all night. In the morning he accompanied him part of the way home, and that he might be under no reſtraint in communicating to him the ſecret deſigns of God, he deſired the ſervant might be ſent on before them. Samuel then took out a ſmall vial of oil, and pouring it upon the head of Saul, anointed and ſaluted him king; and to convince him, that he acted by the authority and direction of Almighty God, who had choſen him to be the prince of Iſrael, he mentioned ſome particular occurrences, that he ſhould meet with in his way home. When thou ſhalt come near to Rachel's tomb, ſaid he, thou ſhalt meet two men, who will inform thee, that the aſſes are found, and that thy father is only anxious about thee. A little further on, thou ſhalt ſee a troop of prophets, coming down from the hill, with inſtruments of muſic before them: the ſpirit of the Lord ſhall ſeize thee at the ſame time; thou ſhalt propheſy with them, and be changed into another man. Every circumſtance happened, as Samuel had foretold. Saul might be now looked upon as the moſt fortunate of men; he had been in queſt of his father's aſſes, and had found a crown. Samuel convened the tribes at Maſphat, and informed them, that ſince they had rejected God, and inſtead of him had choſen to have a king for their protector, they muſt proceed by lots to know, who the perſon was. The lot firſt fell upon the tribe of Benjamin, then upon the family of Metri, and laſtly

laſtly upon the very perſon of Saul. Thus the event confirmed, what had already paſſed in private, and indiſputably proves, that God preſides over and directs the lot of all men. The name of Saul was immediately echoed thro' the tribes; Saul was called upon to make his appearance, but Saul was not to be found: he had abſented himſelf from the aſſembly, and lay concealed at home. Meſſengers were ſent to fetch him; as ſoon as he arrived, Samuel preſented him to the people, and deſired they would obſerve the majeſtic figure of the man, whom God had choſen for their king. For Saul was a graceful perſonage, tall in ſtature, and of a comely mien: his very appearance commanded reſpect, and all the people cried out, God ſave the king! The ſatisfaction ſeemed general; ſome few there were, and they were the ſons of Belial, who expreſſed their diſapprobation. Saul took no notice of their diſloyalty at the time; for Saul then was humble, and ſeemed far from being elated by his good fortune. Happy had he been, if he always had behaved with the ſame moderation. His ſubſequent conduct made it ſoon appear, how hard it is to unite humility and dignity together, and how uncommon to ſee a dignified perſon truly humble.

The holy Fathers point out the election of Saul, as a ſubject of ſerious conſideration for thoſe, who are raiſed to the higheſt ſtations and dignities in life. Whatever their preferment may be either in Church or State, they never muſt forget the character of their Chriſtian profeſſion; no elevation of rank and title can exempt them from the duties of humility. They profeſs themſelves the followers of a crucified God; to be exalted with Chriſt they muſt not be aſhamed to bear their croſs: but if like Saul, they exalt themſelves, and forget the hand that raiſed them, they then may tremble, leſt they be alſo humbled, and finally reprobated, like him, in puniſhment of their pride.

§ L.

§ L. *Jonathan and his armour-bearer.* 1 *Kings* 14.

A. M. 2911, *Before J. C.* 1089. SAUL, soon after he began his reign, was engaged in a war against the Philistines, who had renewed their attacks with greater violence than ever. The two armies lay encamped within sight of each other, frequent skirmishes passed betwixt them, but no decisive stroke was given on either side. Jonathan, the king's son, a youth full of vigour and of great personal courage, grew tired of these slow proceedings. He knew, that it was as easy for the Almighty to overthrow a whole army by the hand of one man, as by the arms of thousands. Full of this confidence in God, and pushed on by the activity of his own genius, he stole out of the camp with no other attendant, than his armour-bearer, and climbing over rocks, that seemed almost inaccessible, threw himself within the enemies lines. He attacked and slew the first, that came to oppose him; his armour-bearer seconded his efforts, and they both performed such prodigies of valour, that they spread terror and confusion thro' the whole camp of the Philistines. The Israelites observing that, and Saul conjecturing from the absence of his son what the matter was, put his troops in motion. Being naturally impetuous in his actions and eager in his pursuits, he bound himself and his whole army by an oath not to eat of the least thing before evening, 'till he had been revenged of his enemies. He rushed forward to pursue the victory, which Jonathan had begun; the Philistines in great confusion turned their arms against one another, took to their heels and endeavoured to save themselves thro' a forest. The victorious Israelits pursued them with great slaughter, and tho' the trees on every side were dropping with honey, yet so sacred was the respect, which the men had for their oath, that not one of so numerous a host durst take so much as a single drop. Only Jonathan, who had heard nothing of his father's oath, being spent with fatigue, dipped the end of his rod into a honeycomb, and catched a slight refresh-

refreſhment, as he paſſed along. Towards evening the army was ordered to halt, that they might breathe awhile, and renew their vigour to purſue the enemy at night. Saul curious to know the ſucceſs of this expedition, conſulted God, but received no anſwer. This ſilence on the part of God he immediately attributed to ſome one of his men, who in violation of his oath had eaten before the time, and raſhly ſwore, that he ſhould die for it, tho' it were Jonathan himſelf. The lots were ordered to be caſt, and the offence fell upon Jonathan. Saul aſked him, what he had done? I have taſted but a little honey replied Jonathan, with the end of my rod, & for ſo ſmall a thing muſt I loſe my life? Saul had ſworn it, and inſiſted upon his execution. But Jonathan was the people's favorite: charmed with his gallant behaviour that day, and reſolved to ſtand by him at all events, they reſcued him out of his father's hands and preſerved his life.

Upon the danger, to which Jonathan was expoſed for having taſted a little honey, the holy Fathers remark how dangerous a thing it is to purſue the deceitful ſweets of worldly pleaſures. Sin to the ſenſual man ſeems oftentimes as ſweet, as honey or the honeycomb. It pleaſes for a time, ſays ſaint Ambroſe, but there lurks a ſting behind, and its wound is deadly: for a moment's pleaſure Jonathan infallibly would have ſuffered death, if the glorious ſucceſs of his paſt actions had not recommended him to the people's favour, and reverſed the ſentence, which his father had pronounced againſt his life.

§ LI. *Reprobation of Saul.* 1 *Kings* 15.

SAUL having checked the inſolence of the Philiſtines, turned his victorious arms againſt the Moabites, the Ammonites, the kings of Edom and Soba: the ſucceſs of his warlike enterprizes made him reſpected both at home and abroad, and he ruled with an abſolute authority

A. M. 2930, *Before J. C.* 1070.

rity over his ſubjects of Iſrael. Having quieted his enemies about him, he was ordered by Almighty God to extend his conqueſts and pour his vengeance upon the Amalecites. The Amalecites were an idolatrous, perfidious nation, the ſworn enemies of the Hebrew people, whom they had attacked and attempted to deſtroy upon their march out of Egypt. Samuel therefore in the name of God commanded Saul to deſtroy their whole race without reſerving ſo much as the leaſt thing, that belonged to them. In obedience to this order Saul put himſelf at the head of two hundred thouſand men, and marched againſt that devoted people. But ſo far was he from complying with the letter or the ſpirit of the order, that he undertook to interpret it, as he pleaſed. He defeated their forces, ſlew the common people, but ſpared their king Agag: he reſerved moreover the fatteſt of the flocks, took to himſelf the moſt precious of the ſpoils, and deſtroyed only the refuſe. Provoked at ſo glaring a prevarication, the Lord commanded Samuel to go and declare to Saul, that he was ſorry for having made him king. Saul, little ſolicitous about the glory due to God, had already erected to himſelf a triumphal arch on Mount Carmel to celebrate the victory, which he had tarniſhed by his diſobedience. Being told that Samuel was coming to the camp, he advanced to meet him, and with the boldeſt aſſurance began to tell him, how glorioufly he had defeated the Amalecites, and how faithfully he had executed the orders of the Lord. What means then the voice I hear of flocks and herds, replied the Prophet? They are what the people have reſerved for ſacrifice, anſwered Saul. What! will the Lord, ſaid Samuel in the ardour of his zeal, will the Lord accept of ſacrifice made in direct oppoſition to his commands? Better is obedience than victims: The fat of rams he will not regard, whilſt his word is diſobeyed. To rebel is in his ſight like the ſin of enchantment, and to diſobey like the crime of idolatry. The Prophet repreſented to the unhappy king the great goodneſs, God had ſhown him; how he had drawn him out of obſcurity and placed him upon a throne; how he had choſen him preferably

to every other man, and raiſed him to honours, which he never could have merited. For as much therefore as thou haſt preferred thy private intereſt to his glory, continued Samuel, and haſt rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord in his turn hath rejected thee, he hath rent the kingdom of Iſrael from thee, and transferred it to thy neighbour, better than thee. Saul was touched with remorſe, and cried out, I have ſinned. If his heart had accorded with his lips, or had his words been the faithful ſign of an unfeigned ſorrow, they might have ſoftened the rigour of the ſentence; in the mouth of an impenitent prince, thoſe words were no more than an inſignificant ſound. Saul more eager to receive the honours of men, than the pardon of his God, deſired the Prophet to honour him before the ancients of the people, and accompany him back to the place, that he might adore the Lord his God. Samuel ſaid, he would not return with him, ſince he had wickedly rebelled againſt the Lord: he turned himſelf to go away, when Saul haſtily caught hold of his cloke to ſtop him, and begged he would not depart in that abrupt manner. Samuel therefore conſented to follow him to the place of adoration, ordered Agag to be brought forth, and hewed him into pieces before the Lord. This done, he departed into Ramatha, ſorely lamenting the unhappy Saul, whom from that time he viſited no more unto the day of his death.

Saul before this had incurred God's diſpleaſure by a ſimilar act of diſobedience, when being eager of battle, and ſeeing the enemy approach, he haſtily and contrary to order preſumed to ſet fire to the ſacrifice, which Samuel was going to offer. The holocauſt was ſtill ſmoaking, when the Prophet came to the camp. The king advanced to make him his excuſes, and ſaid, neceſſity had compelled him to act, as he had done. Samuel reprehended him for his fooliſh preſumption, and condemned the raſhneſs of an action, which forfeited him his crown, and prevented it from deſcending to his children. So true it is, that no action, however plauſible it may outwardly appear, can ever pleaſe or deſerve a reward in the divine ſight, as long as it is done either upon

on a bad motive, or contrary to the order, that God has eſtabliſhed.

§ LII. *Election of David.* 1 *Kings* 16.

A. M. 2934. *Before J. C.* 1066. SAUL having forfeited his crown, as we have ſeen, by his diſobedience, another king, by divine appointment, was ſoon after anointed his ſucceſſor. Samuel was the perſon, whom God employed to perform the ceremony. Samuel by revelation knew, that Bethlehem was the place, and that Iſai's was the family, which was to furniſh a king for Iſrael. Thither he was to go, and conſecrate the man, whom God ſhould ſhow him. But as an undertaking of that nature ſeemed likely to give umbrage to the preſent king and to provoke his reſentment, the Prophet was inſpired to take ſuch ſecret meaſures, as might prevent every dangerous conſequence. He pretended an obligation of offering ſacrifice at Bethlehem, unſuſpected took his victim, and ſet out. Being come to the place, he invited Iſai to bring his ſons and partake with him in the ſacrifice. Iſai was the ſon of Obed, and had eight ſons; he took the ſeven eldeſt with him to wait upon the Prophet. Samuel fixed his eyes upon each one of them, as they came, and took particular notice of the eldeſt, who for his majeſtic figure ſeemed worthy of a crown. But it is not the outſide of man, it is the heart, that God chiefly is attentive to. The ſeven ſons of Iſai therefore paſſed before Samuel, without any heavenly intimation being given in favour of any one of them. The Prophet then aſked Iſai, if he had no other ſon? Iſai ſaid he had, but that he was young, and at that time employed in taking care of his ſheep. Samuel deſired to ſee him. David, for ſo he was called, was immediately ſent for and introduced. Samuel at firſt ſight knew him to be the choſen prince, roſe up and poured the holy unction upon his head. From that moment the ſpirit of God departed from Saul, and reſted upon David. David was in the flower of his youth, of a fair and

comely

comely countenance, meek and gentle in his diſpoſition, and a good muſician. Saul being unhappily abandoned by Almighty God, whom he had firſt abandoned by his diſobedience, was poſſeſſed by an evil ſpirit, which vexed him in a cruel manner, and at certain intervals worked him up into a perfect phrenſy. This misfortune, which was the puniſhment of his paſt ingratitude, and the preſage of his future downfall, proved the beginning of his rival's greatneſs. His frantic fits at times roſe to ſuch a violence, that they became intolerable. His officers out of compaſſion adviſed him to look out for ſome ſkilful muſician, who by the ſtrains of melody might quell his rage of paſſion, and ſooth his ſoul to peace. David for his talents in muſic, as well as for the qualifications of his perſon, was preferred before all others, and ſo admirably well did he know, how to make uſe of the talents he was maſter of, that he worked himſelf into great favour, and became the king's armour-bearer. Whenever Saul was agitated by the evil ſpirit, David played upon the harp. With powerful and pleaſing art the muſician ſo tempered the ſweet variety of his harmonious ſtrains, that he commanded the affections of the ſoul, and charmed the tranſports of paſſion into reaſon.

The melody of David's harp, as ſome of the Fathers remark, repreſents that ſweet and engaging demeanour, which ſhould diſtinguiſh the peaceful miniſters of the Goſpel. Pleaſing and aſſuaſive as the ſtrains of harmony ought to be their diſcourſe, whether they ſtrive to allay the rage, or diſpel the fears of a troubled mind. David himſelf, as St. Gregory obſerves, ſtood afterwards in need of the mild reproofs of Nathan to be freed from the ſin, that enſlaved him. The advantage, which he reaped from that prophet's wiſe remonſtrances, was real and laſting. The comfort, which he himſelf adminiſtered to Saul by the melodious ſounds of his harp, was but ſhort; nor could it hinder that unhappy prince from attempting to take away his life. The pſalms of this inſpired king have at preſent a more powerful influence upon a ſoul, that is well diſpoſed to hear or read them. For, as Saint Auſtin obſerves, nothing can be equal to

the divine harmony of thoſe ſublime truths, which are contained in the pſalms of David; and nothing can ſo powerfully contribute to drive away the ſpirit of pride from our hearts, and awaken them to the voice of Heaven.

§ LIII. *Victory of David over Goliah.* 1 *Kings* 17.

A. M. 2942, *Before J. C.* 1058. A FRESH war was begun between the Iſraelites and Philiſtines. The two armies lay encamped upon two neighbouring hills, with a narrow valley between them. Saul commanded in perſon, but ſeemed not forward to engage the enemy. Goliah, a Philiſtine of gigantic ſize, but of more gigantic pride, advanced between the two armies, and in the moſt opprobrious and inſulting terms challenged the braveſt of the Iſraelites to come out, if he durſt, and decide the war with him by ſingle combat. Shame and indignation ſtung the Iſraelites to ſee themſelves treated with ſuch contemptuous inſolence; but ſo enormous was the giant's bulk, and ſo tremendous was the aſpect of his armour, that no one had the courage to advance againſt him. David had left his attendance upon Saul, and reſumed the care of his father's flocks: three of his brothers having engaged in the king's ſervice, he was ſent by his father Iſai with proviſions for them in the camp. He found the armies ranged in order of battle, ran to enquire after his brethren, and ſaw the great Philiſtine coming forth, as he did every day, to defy the arms of Iſrael. The Iſraelites trembled with fear, and ſhrunk back from the face of danger. David was grieved to hear ſo inſolent a defiance given to the hoſt of the living God, and what grieved him more, to hear it given with impunity. For tho' Saul had promiſed great riches, and his daughter moreover in marriage to any man, who ſhould ſlay that uncircumciſed Philiſtine, yet of all the hoſt there was not one bold enough to accept the challenge. David at that time was about the three and twentieth year of his age, and being

being animated with a laudable zeal for the cauſe of God and the honour of his country, offered to enter the liſts againſt an enemy, whom every one beſides ſeemed to be afraid of. His elder brother hearing him talk in that ſtrain reprimanded him for his preſumption, and told him with a ſneer, that he had better go home, and handle his ſhepherd's crook, than remain an idle ſpectator of the war. The reproof did not abaſh the generous youth, it ſeemed to animate him the more; he publicly declared, that with the king's permiſſion he would engage the mighty Philiſtine, and by the help of God lay him flat upon the ground. His words were reported to Saul; Saul deſired to ſee him. Being introduced to the king, David expreſſed the manly purpoſe of his heart, and begged leave to go and fight againſt the Philiſtine. Saul conſidered the great inequality between a young unexperienced ſhepherd and an old gigantic warrior, and was unwilling to expoſe his crown and dignity to ſo doubtful an iſſue. Let no man's heart be diſmayed in him, ſaid the youth; I have exerciſed my hand againſt the ſavage beaſts, I have purſued and ſtruck a lion and a bear, that came to devour my father's flocks; I ſlew them both, and by the divine ſuccour I will ſlay in the ſame manner this uncircumciſed Philiſtine, who has been ſo hardy as to curſe the hoſt of the living God, and by his death I will take away the reproach of Iſrael. Saul gave his aſſent, ſaying, Go, our Lord be with thee, and forthwith inveſted him with his own armour, his helmet, ſword, and coat of mail. David never had been accuſtomed to ſuch accoutrements, which upon trial he found were more cumberſome than uſeful: he put them off, and deſired to have no other, than the ſhepherd's weapons, which he knew much better how to uſe, his ſtaff and ſling. Goliah ſeeing the beardleſs youth advance with his ſling in his hand, ſcornfully aſked him, if he was coming to beat a dog? He deſpiſed and curſed him, threatening to throw his carcaſs to the beaſts and fowls of the air. Thou comeſt againſt me, replied David, with a ſword and ſhield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hoſts. It is his battle I fight;

he will deliver thee into my hands: I ſhall ſtrike thee, and take away thy head, that all the earth may know, there is a God in Iſrael. Having ſaid this, he took a ſtone out of his ſhepherd's ſcrip, fixed it in his ſling, and with a whirl drove it full againſt the giant's forehead. Down fell Goliah flat upon his face: David that inſtant ran up, and with the Philiſtine's own ſword ſevered his head from the body, to the great joy of the Iſraelites and deep diſmay of the Philiſtines.

This victory of David over Goliah is an admirable figure of that, which Jeſus Chriſt by the humility of his croſs gained over the audacious pride of Lucifer. The holy Fathers look upon the tall Goliah, as the very image of pride, the moſt formidable enemy, that the people of God have to engage with; it is an enemy, that remains even after they have got the better of bears and lions, that is to ſay, of other ſins the moſt enormous. The ſame Saints remark, that pride is not to be defeated by human power any more, than Goliah was by the arms of Saul. David conquered with his ſling and ſtone: by the firſt we underſtand the croſs of Chriſt, and by the ſecond the efficacy of his holy grace, on which our ſtrength and victory depend.

§ LIV. *Triumph of David.* 1 *Kings* 18.

A. M. 2942, *Before J. C.* 1058. WITH Goliah fell the ſtrength of the Philiſtine army. They abandoned their camp at the fatal blow, and in wild diſorder began to make the beſt of their way home. The ſhouting Iſraelites ruſhed acroſs the vale in purſuit of their flying enemies, and drove them with great ſlaughter as far as the gates of Accaron. The joy and ſurpriſe of the victors on this occaſion were equally great: with ſurpriſe they beheld the eſcape, they had made from the frightful dangers, that had threatened them; and with joy they extolled the courage of the man, who had ſo gallantly preſerved their lives at the riſk of his own. Saul himſelf admired the fortitude of this

this young warrior, and informed himself more particularly of his history and family. Jonathan, his eldest son, was taken with the magnanimity of a youth, who by one single action had far outdone the great achievements, which he himself had performed against the same enemy. Far from being envious of David's good fortune, or jealous of the praises, that were given him from every quarter, he honoured his deserts, and invested him with his own arms and princely ornaments. Such an act of generosity was not lost upon a young man, who was naturally good and generous in his disposition. Jonathan and David loved and esteemed each other, and from that time their mutual attachment became so strong, that there seemed to be but one soul and one heart between them. The joy for David's victory was not confined to the king's court or to the army; it spread from one extremity of the kingdom to the other; every rank, every sex, and age of the people concurred in honouring the triumph of their hero, when he returned from victory; the women ran out of the cities to meet him, dancing and singing his praises in a general concert of vocal and instrumental music. Such sounds of acclamation rising on every side, and re-echoed thro' the nation, seem to have prefigured the songs of praise and jubilation, which the different Churches throughout the world were one day to sing in honour of Christ's triumph over sin and death. Flattering as these honours were to David at the time, they became the source of much future trouble, and exposed him to many a danger, which must infallibly have deprived him of life, if his prudence had not been equal to his courage. Very unlike his generous son, Saul grew jealous; he was piqued to see another man more honoured than himself; he swelled with envy to hear it sung, that David had killed his ten thousands, whilst Saul had killed but a thousand. The comparison provoked his spleen, and the distinction made in favour of David fired him with a desire of revenge. A mortal hatred rooted itself in his heart, and prompted him to destroy, whom he had hitherto considered as one of the most deserving of his subjects, and to whom he

he actually ſtood indebted for the preſervation of his crown.

Of the various paſſions, which human weakneſs is ſubject to, envy, ſays Saint Chryſoſtom, is one of the moſt fatal, and moſt common. It rages thro' the church and ſtate; it makes no diſtinction of perſons; it inſinuates itſelf into the breaſts of all, who have any pretenſions to be taken notice of; it is ſecretly nouriſhed in the heart, and yet miſerably torments the heart, that nouriſhes it. The very appearance of merit in another is enough to make it ſhoot its ſting, and the more ſhining that merit is, the more envenomed is its malice. It allows no reſt to thoſe, who are infected with its poiſon, it ſeldom admits of any cure; it lurked in the veins of Saul, as long as he lived. The moſt deſerving are commonly the chief objects of its rancor. The rays of virtue, that enlighten the good, are a burning torment to the envious.

§ LV. *Saul's attempts againſt David.* 1 *Kings* 19.

A. M. 2943. *Before J. C.* 1057. SAUL's animoſity againſt David grew daily more and more violent; the evil ſpirit continued ſtill to vex him, and David ſoothed him with his harp. As the ſweet muſician was one day playing, according to his uſual cuſtom, the frantic prince made a ſudden puſh at him with his lance. David, who was appriſed of the king's malice, and never off his guard againſt the attempts he made upon his life, ſaw the motion of his arm, and happily avoided the ſtroke. Saul was convinced, that the virtuous youth was under the divine protection, obſerved how prudent he was in all his ways, and concluded that every attempt to ſurpriſe him would be ineffectual: he therefore diſmiſſed him from his attendance, and gave him a conſiderable command in the army. To men, who ſaw not into the king's intention, David might thereby ſeem to have gained the royal favour; Saul intended nothing leſs than his ruin. By a murderous deſign, in which

which David himſelf was afterwards too ſucceſsful againſt Urias, he reſolved to expoſe him to the ſwords of the Philiſtines. He had promiſed, as has been mentioned, to give his daughter in marriage to the conqueror of Goliah. Envy had made him unfaithful to his promiſe, and Merob, his eldeſt daughter, was married to another man. Nor had David indeed ever claimed her: for being conſcious of his lowly birth, he thought himſelf unqualified for an alliance with the king's daughter. But a mutual affection ſpringing up between him and Michol, Saul's ſecond daughter, he altered his mind, and wiſhed to become the king's ſon-in-law. Saul was no ſtranger to their inclinations, and offered to conſent to their marriage upon condition, that he firſt killed him a hundred of the uncircumciſed Philiſtines. David readily accepted of the condition, as tho' it had been meant to do him honour, led out his little troop to battle, attacked and defeated the Philiſtine army, of which he killed no fewer than two hundred men with his own hand. Fluſhed with ſucceſs he haſtened back to Saul, numbered the trophies of his victory before him, and claimed Michol, as the crown, of his conqueſt. Saul was vexed to ſee the youth return triumphant from the field, where he hoped to have ſeen him ſlain: he was witneſs of the wiſdom, with which David conducted himſelf in all his actions; he perceived his fame and favour with the people increaſing daily; he both feared and hated him. It had been natural to ſuppoſe, that his animoſity might have been extinguiſhed or at leaſt abated, when he made him his ſon-in-law. But the rancor of Saul's heart was incurable, he made no ſecret of his murderous deſign, he ſpoke to his ſervants and ſon Jonathan to ſecond him in the bloody attempt. Sitting one day in his houſe with a lance in his hand, he was ſuddenly ſeized by the evil ſpirit, that haunted him, ſtruck at David, as he was playing upon the harp, and tried to nail him to the wall. David happily eſcaped the ſtroke, & fled from the king's preſence. Jonathan, who felt both for his father and his friend, did all he could to make them reconciled: he reaſoned and expoſtulated with his father upon the injuſtice

tice of his proceedings againſt an innocent man, who had done him no injury; he urged every argument, that the tendereſt affection for a friend, and the moſt dutiful reſpect for a father could ſuggeſt; all to no purpoſe. Saul in the night time ſent a guard to ſurround David's houſe, and to kill him, as ſoon as he ſhould make his appearance in the morning. Michol, who loved David as much, as her father hated him, was upon the watch, and defeated the cruel order by letting him ſecretly down from a window. To amuſe the guard, while her huſband eſcaped, and to make them believe that he was ſick and unable to riſe, ſhe dreſſed up a ſtatue, which ſhe laid upon the bed, and covered with clothes. The innocent deceit had its effect: David went off unpurſued, and retreated to Samuel's houſe in Ramatha. Saul being told, how his ſcheme had failed thro' the contrivance of his own daughter, called her to an account for what ſhe had done, and diſpatched his ſerjeants to ſeize on David even in the Prophet's houſe. The ſerjeants found a troop of Prophets ſtanding before Samuel, grew inſpired at the ſight, and beginning to propheſy like them, forgot their errand. Saul upon that ſent other meſſengers, who returned propheſying in like manner; and as the ſame thing happened a third time to others of his men, he reſolved in a tranſport of anger to go himſelf into Ramatha. The ſpirit of the Lord came alſo upon him, as he went along, and in ſpite of his premediated malice he continued propheſying and ſinging with the reſt all that day and night: from whence aroſe the proverb, What, is Saul alſo amongſt the Prophets!

From theſe facts it appears, that the potentates of the earth have no other power, than what they hold from God, who either indulges or reſtrains them in the exerciſe of it, as he pleaſes, He at his nod either raiſes or depreſſes them, he ſuffers them to rage no longer, than is conducive to his deſigns; he laughs at their feeble efforts, and at his own time reſcues from their hands, whomſoever he decrees to ſave.

§ LVI.

§ LVI. *Jonathan and David.* 1 *Kings* 20.

DAVID, perceiving the obſtinancy of Saul's malice againſt his life, began to think of leaving the country. *A. M.* 2944, *Before J. C.* 1056.

Jonathan was in the deepeſt concern for the ſafety of his friend, and being unwilling to be ſevered from his company, begged he would not condemn himſelf to a foreign baniſhment, before he was thoroughly informed of the king's diſpoſition. A ſolemn day was near at hand, when the king was to dine in public with his officers. Every one was there excepting David: David's ſeat ſtood vacant, and the king ſeemed much diſpleaſed: Jonathan offered to make excuſes, which did but exaſperate his father's ſpleen, and convinced him, that from Saul no peace was to be expected. He had promiſed David to let him know, how the king ſtood effected, and agreed upon the ſign, that he was to make him. David was to lie concealed behind a ſtone, which ſtood up in a certain field, where Jonathan appeared by appointment with his bow and arrow under the pretext of ſhooting at a mark. Jonathan ſhot his arrows near the ſtone, and by the words he ſpoke to the page, whom he ſent to pick them up, ſignified to David, that he muſt fly to ſave his life. The boy brought the arrows to his maſter, ignorant of what was doing. Jonathan gave him his arms, and bade him carry them back into town. When the boy was gone, David roſe from behind the ſtone, and falling flat upon the ground thrice made his obeiſance to Jonathan. They met and embraced each other, they tenderly wept, and renewed their promiſe of mutual friendſhip, as long as life ſhould laſt. With great reluctance they parted from one another, David was the more afflicted, and Jonathan bade him go in peace.

David was now bereft of every neceſſary of life; reduced to the condition of a baniſhed man, he thought no refuge ſo ſecure as amongſt the miniſters of God's altar: he retired to the houſe of Achimelech the High-prieſt. Achimelech expreſſed great ſurprize at ſeeing

him come alone. David pretended ſome preſſing buſineſs, which required great expedition, and had prevented his bringing any proviſion with him. Achimelech had no other than ſhow-bread to offer him, which none but prieſts were allowed to eat of. David's diſtreſs was very urgent; neceſſity, he thought, exempted him from that ceremonial law; he took of the holy bread, and Jeſus Chriſt in his Goſpel has approved his conduct. He alſo for his defence took the ſword of Goliah, which was there, and the High-prieſt with a goodneſs, which afterwards coſt him his life, gave him every other aſſiſtance, that lay in his power. One of Saul's officers happened to be there at the time, and thinking it a fair opportunity of making his court to the king, gave immediate information of what he had ſeen. This wicked courtier was by birth an Idumean, and known by the name of Doeg. Upon that information Saul in his rage ſent for Achimelech, whom he accuſed of high treaſon, as having conſpired with David againſt his life. The virtuous Prieſt, not conſcious to himſelf of having done any thing more, than what charity and a due reſpect had prompted him to do for the king's ſon-in-law, began to plead in defence of his own innocence, and ſpoke freely in commendation of David's honour and fidelity to his prince. Saul was more irritated, than appeaſed by the pontiff's ſpeech, and ordered him to be put to death upon the ſpot. Achimelech ſtood accompanied with eighty-five other prieſts, in their ſacerdotal robes. Their ſacred character inſpired reſpect into the king's ſervants, who refuſed to execute their maſter's orders, and Doeg was the only man hardy enough to imbrue his hands in the blood of thoſe venerable prieſts of the Lord. This execution was followed by the ruin of Nobe, one of the prieſts cities. Abiathar, the ſon of Achimelech, eſcaped from the maſſacre, and informed David of what the tyrant had done. David was ſorely grieved at the relation, and humbly conſidered himſelf as the cauſe of all that bloodſhed. He was no longer ſafe in the king's dominions; he fled for refuge amongſt the enemies of his country, and threw himſelf into the hands of Achis king

king of Geth. Geth was not a place of ſafety for David, where his achievements were ſo well known; he was ſoon diſcovered to be the man, who had ſlain their great champion Goliah, and had infallibly been ſacrificed to the reſentment of the citizens, if he had not with great preſence of mind counterfeited the fool, and paſſed himſelf off for a madman.

The holy Fathers conſider the prudence of David in counterfeiting the fool on this occaſion, as a figure of that imaginary folly, which the Gentiles once imputed to the Croſs of Jeſus Chriſt, but which, according to Saint Paul, ſurpaſſes the heigth of all created wiſdom. The true followers of Jeſus Chriſt have never been aſhamed of ſuch an imputation from a ſelf-conceited world. It is enough for them to be accounted wiſe by God, whatever they may paſs for in the opinion of men. By experience they know, that what is by worldly men often accounted folly, is in the eyes of God the heigth of wiſdom, and what the wiſeſt of the wicked often adopt in practice, is little better than the depth of folly.

§ LVII. *David and Abigail.* 1 *Kings* 25.

DAVID's ſituation was become truly deplorable, and his life moſt wretched. Always in danger of being either betrayed or aſſaſſinated, he was driven from the ſociety of men, and obliged to ſhelter himſelf in woods and mountains. Being cloſely purſued by an implacable and active enemy, he ſkulked from place to place, from one wilderneſs to another, creeping into caverns and the dens of wild beaſts. Yet even there he was often upon the point of being taken and delivered into the hands of Saul, as it happened to him in the deſert of Ziph. At the hazard of his life he had but juſt time to ſlip down the rock, from whence he fled into the deſert of Maon. That was his place of refuge more than once, where being cloſely purſued he had not only enemies, but alſo hunger to ſtruggle with: he ſaw himſelf and his *A. M.* 2945, *Before J. C.* 1055.

truſty followers, who had joined him to the number of about ſix hundred, in danger of periſhing for want of neceſſaries. There lived in the neighbourhood a man, whoſe name was Nabal, poſſeſſed of great riches and numerous flocks, but rough of temper and ſavage even to cruelty. To this man David applied himſelf in his diſtreſs: he ſent to him ten of his followers to beg, that he would relieve the wants of a diſtreſt company, who had done him no injury. When they came to Nabal's houſe, which was upon mount Carmel, they humbly repreſented their diſtreſs for want of proviſions; they told him, that David, the ſon of Iſai, was their leader, and merited ſome return for the friendſhip, he had ſhown to his ſhepherds in the deſert. Nabal rudely anſwered, that he had no proviſions for them, that he knew nothing of them or of their leader, but that the country was over-run with ſlaves, who were trying to eſcape from their maſters. David was exaſperated at ſo injurious an anſwer; an anſwer, which he had little expected, and much leſs deſerved: beſides the refuſal, which he thought unjuſt, it expreſſed a contempt, which he reſolved to puniſh. He ordered his men to girt on their ſwords and follow him: he laid aſide his natural meekneſs, and meditated a ſtroke, which muſt have ended in the deſtruction of Nabal and all his family, had it not been prevented by the diſcreet and virtuous Abigail. Abigail was the wife of Nabal, a woman as amiable for her prudence, as her huſband was odious for his roughneſs: ſhe being informed of David's haſty approach to repay Nabal for his abuſe, went out to meet him with preſents and plenty of proviſions. As ſoon as they met, ſhe accoſted him in ſo ſubmiſſive and ſo engaging a manner, that ſhe at once mollified his anger, and diſarmed his revenge. Nabal knew nothing of his danger, till it was paſt. Abigail told him of it the next morning, and related all ſhe had done to ſave him. The man was ſo affected at the account, that he fell ſick, and died ten days after. David made a propoſal of marriage to the widow, which ſhe at firſt modeſtly declined, and then conſented to.

Abigail

Abigail by the prudent remonſtrance, ſhe made to David in his anger, is a model of diſcretion in teaching us to ſooth and pacify the ſallies of paſſion both in ourſelves and others: and David by the deference he paid to her advice, ſets a rare example of moderation to thoſe, who have received provocation. To liſten to advice, and to ſtifle reſentment, is but too often termed a mark of weakneſs and diſhonour. But nothing ſurely ſo becomes the dignity of man, as to make paſſion give way to reaſon; and to a Chriſtian nothing is more honourable, than to deſiſt from a purſuit, which can no longer be carried on conſiſtently with charity and juſtice.

§ LVIII. *David's generoſity.* 1 *Kings* 26.

IN the midſt of theſe troubles, that diſgraced the kingdom of Iſrael, Samuel died in the ninetieth year of his age. He was a man of unſhaken virtue, faithful to God, and loyal to his prince, whoſe faults he never flattered, and for whoſe misfortunes he daily wept. To him are attributed the books of Judges and Ruth. His death was lamented by all the people of Iſrael. Saul in the interim perſiſted in his attemps againſt David with unrelenting violence, and was waſting the ſtrength of his kingdom againſt a harmleſs man, whom he fancied to be his enemy. Being informed by his ſpies, that he was come back into the wilderneſs of Ziph, he marched at the head of three thouſand men, and encamped round the hill, where he ſuppoſed his rival to lie concealed. David by a ſingular exertion of courage, which could only come from God, reſolved to viſit him in his tent. With a ſingle attendant, called Abiſai, he went down under the covert of a dark night into Saul's camp, and penetrating into the royal pavilion found Saul and his officers aſleep. Abiſai whiſpered in his ear, That he had his enemy now lying at his mercy, and that with one ſtroke he might put an end to all his ſufferings. David had too much generoſity to commit

A. M. 2947, *Before J. C.* 1053.

mit ſo baſe an action, and was too well principled in the duty of a ſubject to his ſovereign to ſtrike, or to ſuffer Abiſai to ſtrike the Lord's annointed. He contented himſelf with the king's lance and goblet, which he took away, and carried with him back upon the hill. Being there beyond the reach of any weapon, he called with a loud voice upon Abner, the general of Saul's army, and jocoſely rallied him for the incomparable care he took of his royal maſter. Saul awoke at the ſound, and hearing David's voice, roſe up: he called after him with a ſmoothneſs of expreſſion, which denoted ſome abatement of his fury, he ſpoke in a gentle accent, and ſtiled him his ſon. David began in a ſubmiſſive manner to expoſtulate with the king, why he harraſſed himſelf in the purſuit of a harmleſs man, who with reſpect to him, was no more than a little flea? and whether it became the mighty king of Iſrael to purſue ſo inſignificant a ſubject, as he was, like a trembling partridge upon the mountain's top? If the Lord in his anger, ſaid he, hath ſtirred you up to commit theſe violences againſt one of your moſt faithful ſervants, may he accept my ſacrifice: but if any evil counſellors have puſhed you on to act as you do, whoever they may be, they are accurſed in the ſight of our Lord. To a remonſtrance ſo juſt and concluſive, Saul had no reply to make; he only ſaid, he had ſinned and acted fooliſhly: he owned himſelf indebted to him for his life, begged he would return, and promiſed to give him no future diſturbance. David ſent him back his lance, and concluded with a prayer, hoping, that as he had ſpared the life of Saul, ſo the Lord would ſpare his, and free him from diſtreſs.

The holy Fathers are unanimous in their praiſes of David on this occaſion. Saint Ambroſe ſpeaks in raptures of him, who having it in his power to free himſelf at once from the perſecution of a tyrant, who ſought his life, choſe to remain expoſed to continual death rather than lift his hand againſt the annointed of the Lord. The gratification of his revenge for the evil treatment he had received, the immediate poſſeſſion of a crown, the inſurance of his life from danger, were ſtrong inducements

ments to the action; but the love of virtue, and conſcious duty had a more powerful influence upon David; his fidelity to God and his king was grounded upon principles, that were unſhaken and invariable. His motive was diſintereſted and pure: from Saul he expected no return of gratitude, he had experienced none. He once before had ſhown the ſame generoſity, when Saul unarmed and alone entered the cave, where he and his men lay concealed; he offered no violence to the king's perſon, he reſtrained his followers from laying hold of him, he contented himſelf with a ſlip of his cloke, which he ſoftly cut off as a mark, that he could as eaſily have taken away his life. Tho' Saul admired that forgiving generoſity of David's temper at the time, yet his animoſity ſoon flamed out anew, and prompted him to commit freſh violences againſt his meek benefactor. David in pardoning his enemy is the more deſerving of our praiſe, as ſuch a pardon of injuries had not then been ſanctified by the example or taught by the word of an incarnate God; and his example ought to make thoſe Chriſtians bluſh, who fancy they may puſh their reſentments againſt the members of Jeſus Chriſt to what violence and to what lengths they pleaſe.

§ LXI. *David divides the ſpoils of Siceleg.* 1 *Kings* 30.

DAVID ſoon found, that Saul was not to be depended upon, and that his life was in conſtant danger. Self-preſervation forced him to throw himſelf once more into the hands of Achis, the king of Geth. Achis, tho' a Philiſtine, had principles of generoſity, and knew how to feel for the diſtreſt. He received the illuſtrious fugitive with great marks of kindneſs, and gave him the town of Siceleg for his reſidence. Hoſtilities had been renewed between the Iſraelites and Philiſtines, and Achis inſiſted upon David's accompanying him to the war. David by that means was reduced to the ſad alternative either of diſobliging his generous benefactor or of fighting againſt his lawful ſovereign. In ſuch embarraſſed circumſtances

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circumſtances he was at a loſs how to act, when the Philiſtines themſelves luckily drew him out of the difficulty. They thought an Iſraelite was not to be truſted in an expedition againſt his fellow citizens, and therefore obliged Achis to diſmiſs him from the army. Achis reluctantly delivered their commands to David, which he ſoftened with expreſſions of eſteem, and made him his excuſes upon the neceſſity he was under of ſatisfying the Philiſtine chiefs, who would not ſuffer an Iſraelite to accompany them to battle. David was no ſooner extricated out of one difficulty, than involved in another. During his abſence in the Philiſtine camp, a roving party of the Amalecites had plundered Siceleg, and ſet fire to the houſes. Every thing of value was carried off by the plunderers, the children and the women were made priſoners, amongſt whom were the wives of David and his followers. The men were ſo ſenſibly afflicted at this diſaſter, that not knowing which way to turn themſelves, they threw the blame upon their leader, and threatened to ſtone him to death. David tho' abandoned by his partiſans, was not abandoned by his own fortitude: he put his truſt in God, and with ſix hundred warriors ſet off in purſuit of the robbers. Succeſs he knew depended on expedition; he therefore continued his march with ſuch vigour, that two hundred of his men were not able to keep pace with him. He left them behind, and puſhing on briſkly with the reſt came up with the enemy, as they were enjoying themſelves over their booty, little thinking of an attack. David fell furiouſly upon them; a bloody carnage enſued, which laſted till the evening of next day, when not a man of the Amalecites was left alive, excepting thoſe who eſcaped by the help of their camels. The victors recovered all and even more, than they had loſt. Upon their return a diſpute aroſe, whether they, who had not ſhared in the danger of the field, ſhould have their ſhare in the booty: and the deciſion being left by common conſent to David's arbitration, he judiciouſly pronounced in their favour. This deciſion paſſed afterwards into a law, and was ſtrictly adhered to in every future diviſion of the ſpoils of war.

Similar

Similar to this is the ſpiritual economy of the Church in an impartial communication of prayers and merits between its component members. And a comfortable reflection it is for ſuch of the faithful, who have not either the talents or the ſtrength to perform great actions, or to bear hard labours in the divine ſervice. Enliſted under the ſame banner of Jeſus Chriſt, they all concur with one another in the profeſſion of the ſame faith, they all ſhare in the ſame ſpiritual treaſures, and to each one is impartially meaſured out the reward, not according to the ſtrength of bones, or the rank of worldly honours, but according to his real deſerts in the eyes of God. Charity and zeal may equal the little with the great, and render the weak more deſerving than the ſtrong. For with God there is no exception of perſons.

§ LX. *Death of Saul.* 1 *Kings* 31.

DAVID by the refuſal he met with from the Philiſtine princes of letting him ſerve in their army, was even more fortunate, than he imagined at the time; he was thereby prevented not only from fighting, but alſo from conquering againſt his country; for in that day's battle Saul and his ſons were ſlain, and Iſrael put to a ſhameful flight. That miſerable prince had been long left by the ſpirit of God, and turned over to his own. Racked with the ſtings of a guilty conſcience within, and preſſed by the attacks of a furious enemy without, full of apprehenſions, and anxious about the event, he fought in deſpair to know from the Devil, what he did not deſerve to learn from God. He diſguiſed himſelf, and went to conſult the noted ſorcereſs of Endor. When he came there, he told her ſhe muſt raiſe him up the ghoſt of Samuel. The woman, being afraid of the ſevere laws, which Saul had lately made againſt the dealers in art magic, refuſed to act, till he had promiſed on oath, that no harm ſhould befall her for the thing ſhe was about. Emboldened by the ſolemn promiſe he made her, *A. M.* 2949, *Before J. C.* 1051.

ſhe then began her enchantments, and behold, before ſhe had finiſhed, the ghoſt of Samuel unexpectedly appeared; as ſoon as ſhe ſaw him, ſhe underſtood that the perſon, who conſulted her, was Saul in diſguiſe. Apprehenſive of the ſevereſt vengeance, ſhe began to tremble for her life. The king bade her not fear, and aſked what ſhe ſaw? By the deſcription ſhe gave of the dreſs and awful figure of the phantom, Saul knew it to be Samuel, and bowed out of reverence to the ground. The ghoſt then ſaid, Why haſt thou troubled my repoſe? Why doeſt thou aſk of me, what thou knoweſt already? The Lord hath left thee, and is gone over to thy rival. He will now do to thee, as thou haſt heard heretofore from my mouth; he will ſever thy kingdom from thee, and give it to David: thee and thy Iſraelites he hath delivered into the hands of the Philiſtines; to-morrow thou and thy ſons ſhall be amongſt the dead. Saul forthwith fell all along the ground; for he was frightened with the words of Samuel, and there was no ſtrength in him. The woman raiſed him up, gave him a refreſhment, and diſmiſſed him, as ſoon as he had ſtrength to go. The wretched prince walked away with a ſorrowful heart, black with deſpair, and full of his approaching deſtiny. The fatal day was at hand; the two armies of Iſrael and Philiſthiim ſtood arrayed for battle upon the mountains of Gelboe. The ſignal being given, the Iſraelites ſhrunk back from the enemy, and Jonathan and his two brothers were ſlain: the whole weight of the battle then fell upon Saul: an arrow from a Philiſtine's bow gave him a deadly wound: covered with diſgrace, and ſtill breathing, he commanded his armour-bearer to ſtab him; which the armour-bearer refuſing to do, he caught hold of his ſword, and ſetting the point againſt his breaſt, fell upon it, and expired.

Such was the exit of unhappy Saul, the firſt king of Iſrael. By an act of violence againſt his own life he put an end to the long and barbarous violences, which he had wantonly been guilty of againſt others. Happy might he have been, if he either had continued in a private ſtation, or only had retained the ſame humble ſentiments,

timents, which he carried with him to the throne. Guiltleſs as the child of a year old, he began his reign; but in that happy diſpoſition he reigned no more than two years. Elated with power, and dazzled with the ſplendor of a crown, he grew imperious and violent. He ſet off with the promiſing ſhow of an auſpicious reign; he fell, before he had far advanced, and at laſt finiſhed by a death, which has rendered him a frightful example to all ſucceeding ages. The holy Fathers conſider Saul under the ſame predicament in the old law, as they do Judas in the new. Both had been particularly choſen by God himſelf, and were both rejected; the firſt for his pride, the ſecond for his avarice. They both fell from a ſtation the moſt dignified, both in deſpair ended their days by ſelf-murder. No call, no ſtation of life, be it what it may, can exempt a man from the weakneſs of human nature. No man is ſecure from temptation. The moſt elevated in dignity, ſays Saint Ambroſe, and the moſt ſteady, as they may ſeem, in the way of virtue, ought to be always fearful, and always upon their guard, leſt they fall. A ſuppliant hope in God, and an humble diffidence of themſelves are neceſſary means to preſerve the grace of final perſeverance.

§ LXI. *Lamentation of David.* 2 *Kings* 1.

THE death of Saul and total overthrow of his army was a ſubject of univerſal triumph amongſt the Philiſtines. They took poſſeſſion of the field of battle next day, and finding the king's corpſe amongſt the ſlain, ſtript him of his armour, and cut off his head, which they ordered to be carried about, and ſhown thro' their land, to convince the people of his death. His armour they dedicated to Aſtaroth, and his head they faſtened up in the temple of Dagon. David in the interim, who had not leſs reaſon to be glad than they, was very differently affected. Far from rejoicing at an event, ſo tragical in itſelf, tho' ſo advantageous to him, he ſhed *A. M.* 2949, *Before J. C.* 1051.

tears of real ſorrow. In a mournful canticle, which he compoſed on the occaſion, he pathetically deplores the melancholy fate of Saul, the anointed of the Lord: in a ſtrain ſtill more moving he laments the untimely fall of Jonathan, whom he affectionately ſtiles his brother and moſt loving friend. He invites the daughters of Iſrael to throw aſide their gay attire, to pour out their tears with him, and mourn over the hapleſs ſlain. Then, as if the place had been acceſſary to the diſaſter, he prays that neither the rain, nor the dew of Heaven may fall upon the mountains of Gelboe, where the ſhield of the valiant is caſt away, where Saul lies trodden on the ground, as tho' he had not been anointed with oil. O, tell it not in Geth, tell it not in Aſcalon, leſt the daughters of the Philiſtines exult, leſt the daughters of the uncircumciſed rejoice. David did not content himſelf with theſe effuſions of his grief in private, he expreſſed himſelf by his actions to the public. He thanked the citizens of Jabes Galaad, who had taken up and interred the bodies of Saul and his unfortunate ſons. The firſt account of this fatal overthrow was brought to David in Siceleg by a young Amalecite, who pretended to have been preſent at the king's death, and was in hopes of ingratiating himſelf by the relation of a ſtory, which he embelliſhed with ſeveral circumſtances of his own invention. I came by chance, ſaid he, to the mountain of Gelboe, where I found the king oppreſſed with anguiſh and leaning upon his ſpear. At my approach he called out, and bade me free him from the diſtreſs, he was in: wherefore knowing, that it was impoſſible for him to live after the ſtroke he had received, I complied with his deſire; I killed him; I took the diadem from his head, and the bracelet from his arm, which I have brought hither to thee, my Lord. David rent his garments at the ſad report, aſked the Amalecite how he had dared in that manner to lift his hand againſt the Lord's anointed, and ordered him to be put to death in puniſhment of his crime.

The throne being vacant, and David knowing himſelf to be the man, who was to fill it, conſulted the Lord

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to know, how he was to act in this emergency, and where to go. The Lord bade him return to Hebron, the capital city of Judea; he went, was publicly anointed king, and acknowledged by that tribe. The other tribes being influenced by Abner, the late king's chief minister, acknowledged Isboseth, a son of Saul, for their king, and thereby divided the nation into two parties. A civil contest for the crown began between the two competitors; David appointed Joab to be his general, while Abner with great abilities supported the interest of Isboseth. The dispute was carried on with the loss of many lives for seven years, when Isboseth was traiterously murdered by two assassins, who carried his head to David. David was no more inclined to encourage murder in these two traitors, than he had been in the young Amalecite, and therefore ordered them to be treated in the same manner. Far from insulting an enemy in his fall, or from rejoicing at the advantage, which he was to reap by it, he considered and felt for the wrongs, that his enemy had suffered from the hands of his assassins: and thus by a double instance of his justice, he convinces us, that he not only had the meekness to forgive the injuries, but also the generosity to honour the memory of his inveterate enemies. He put to death the Amalecite, who had declared himself guilty of the death of Saul, and he executed Rechab and Baana for having stabbed Isboseth his son.

§ LXII. *Sudden death of Oza.* 2 *Kings* 6.

BY the death of Isboseth, David became the peaceable possessor of the crown of Israel without a rival: the tribes unanimously acknowledged his undoubted right, and voluntarily submitted to his authority. The flame of civil discord being thus happily extinguished, the force of the nation was no longer divided, and the Israelites being again united under one head, had no other than the common interest to pursue. David resolved to make *A. M.* 2956, *Before J. C.* 1044.

make uſe of the power, which God had placed in his hands, againſt the ancient enemies of his country. His firſt expedition was againſt the fortreſs of Jeruſalem, which was inhabited by the Jebuſeans, and never had ſubmitted to the Hebrew yoke. This fortreſs, which ſtood within the walls of the city upon mount Sion, was ſo advantageouſly ſituated, that it ſeemed to bid defiance to the force, that could be brought againſt it: the garriſon inſulted David for an attempt, which they deemed raſh, and told him, the very blind and lame of the place would be enough to repel his attacks. But there is nothing ſo arduous, which true courage, ſupported by the arm of God, cannot overcome. David at that time had an army compoſed of heros; to encourage them to victory, he promiſed the command to him, who ſhould firſt ſtrike the Jebuſean, and gave orders for a general aſſault. Joab was the firſt, that mounted upon the wall, the troops ruſhed on after their general, and the city was added to the conqueſts of Iſrael. David took poſſeſſion of the caſtle of Sion for himſelf, repaired the old buildings and erected new ones round about upon the hill, which from his name was thence forward called the city of David. Gratitude to God for this ſucceſs made him turn his thoughts upon the public duties of religion. The Ark of God had for many years lain in a ſtate of obſcurity, in the private houſe of Abinadab. The pious king's intention was to reſtore its firſt luſtre: for that purpoſe he prepared a magnificent pavilion for its reception upon mount Sion, within the precincts of his own palace. Notice was given for a public tranſlation of the Ark, and the people were ordered to attend. They aſſembled to the number of thirty thouſand; a new wain was made, the Ark laid upon it, and Oza, the ſon of Abinadab, appointed to drive the oxen. The proceſſion was conducted with that ſolemn ſhow of religious magnificence, which became the piety of a great king. David thought it not beneath his royal dignity to play upon the harp, being accompanied by the numerous quires of muſicians, whoſe joyful and harmonious ſounds enlivened the country, as they paſſed along. Every thing ſeem-

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ed to conſpire to the public jubilee, when an unlucky accident interrupted the proceſſion, and ſuddenly threw the minds of all into a melancholy conſternation. One of the oxen began to kick, and made the Ark lean on one ſide: Oza thinking it to be in danger of falling, haſtily ſtretched out his hand, and held it. The Lord was provoked at the raſhneſs of his action, ſays the Scripture, and ſtruck him dead upon the ſpot. The ſpectators were ſeized with dread, David himſelf was terrified, and durſt not proceed in his deſign of lodging the tremendous Ark within the precincts of his palace. He depoſited it in the houſe of Obededom, a virtuous Levite, where it remained for three months.

The dreadful judgment, that befell Oza for raſhly laying his hand upon the Ark, leaves no room to doubt of the awful reſpect, which is due, and which God rigorouſly requires to be paid him in the things, that regard his holy ſervice. In the law of grace infinitely more holy is the altar of Almighty God, than was the Ark under the law of Moyſes; an irreverence ſhown to the things, of which the Ark was no more than the figure, is of a more enormous guilt, and its puniſhment, tho' not attended with viſible ſtrokes of divine vengeance, is infinitely more to be apprehended.

§ LXIII. *Tranſlation of the Ark.* 2 *Kings* 6.

THE viſible bleſſings, which God ſhowered down upon Obededom in conſideration of the Ark being under his roof, diſpelled the king's fears, and made him wiſh to ſhare in the divine favours. At the end of three months from Oza's death, David reaſſumed his firſt deſign of tranſlating the Ark to Jeruſalem: and to guard againſt every accident of the kind, that had happened before, he conſidered in what manner Moyſes had directed the Ark to be carried, whenever it ſhould be neceſſary to remove it from one place to another. He found upon examination, that none but Prieſts and Le-

A. M. 2936. *Before J. C.* 1044.

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vites were permitted to approach it, and that it was not to be drawn by beaſts, but carried upon men's ſhoulders. He therefore ordered the Levites to attend in ceremony on the day appointed, pacific ſacrifices to be prepared, and every arrangement made ſuitable for the ſolemnity. Sacred canticles of his own compoſition were ſet to muſic, and ſkilful muſicians appointed to perform with inſtruments and voices. The Ark of the Covenant was brought forth by the ſons of Levi, who advanced with it upon their ſhoulders thro' a prodigious croud of ſpectators, that lined the road; the ground ſtreamed with the blood of victims, which were immolated to the living God, while hills and vales reſounded with the ſtrains of vocal and inſtrumental harmony. Dreſſed in a linnen garment, ſuch as the Prophets wore, the king played upon his harp, and danced with all his might before the Ark, as it moved along, till he came to mount Sion. Michol was at the palace window waiting for the proceſſion, and ſeeing her royal conſort without his robes of ſtate and dancing in the croud, deſpiſed him in her heart for his devotion. When the ceremony was over, ſhe ran to meet him, and in a ſtrain of irony ſaid, That it was nobly performed, that it was a glorious ſight to ſee the king of Iſrael ſtript of his royal robes, and dancing like a buffoon before his ſubjects. David, whoſe ſentiments of religion were too well grounded, ſays Saint Ambroſe, to be ſhaken by a woman's ridicule, meekly anſwered, The Lord hath ſelected me from amidſt the meaneſt of his ſervants, and hath preferred me to thy father. From God I received my crown, and thro' his mercy I am peaceably poſſeſſed of the kingdom of Iſrael: for which reaſon I will humble myſelf ſtill more and more before him. I wiſh to be always little in my own eyes, and it ſhall be my glory to be thus upon a level with the loweſt of my ſubjects.

Thus did this holy king, ſays Saint Gregory, lay aſide the marks of royalty, that he might give ſcope to his piety. Forgetful of his dignity, forgetful of his victories, which had made him great in every ones eyes but his own, he not only humbled himſelf, but was alſo willing

willing to be humbled by others. His example is a pattern of true devotion and humility; it teaches all Christians of whatsoever rank, never to be ashamed of the duty, they owe to God, and never to imagine, that they vilify or degrade themselves by submitting to the external practice of religious worship. To be afraid of demeaning themselves by a public performance of their Christian obligations, is to be ashamed of the cross of Christ. If an irreligious world should try, like Michol, to laugh them out of their duty, with a noble disdain, like that of David, let them despise the impious raillery, and remember the sacred dignity, to which God has raised them, by adopting them for his sons and making them the members of his Church.

§ LXIV. *Victories of David over the Ammonites.* 2 *Kings* 10.

THE sublime idea, that David entertained of the majesty of God, and the zeal he had of promoting the divine worship, made him think, that the honours he had paid to God in translating his Ark to mount Sion, fell far short of what were still due. He reflected, that the Ark of God had no better covering, than that of skins, whilst he himself was lodged in a palace of cedar: he therefore traced in his mind the plan of a stately temple, which he resolved to build to the Lord of hosts. He communicated his design to the prophet Nathan, and Nathan, tho' he secretly approved of it, was inspired to tell him, that such a plan should not be executed till after his death; that from his seed should arise a son, who should build a house to the Lord, and that the throne of his kingdom should be established for ever. David humbly acquiesced, and with acts of thanksgiving resigned himself to God for the accomplishment of his divine promises. To make his subjects happy in the interim, and to free them from the disgraceful burden of paying tribute to other princes, became the object of *A. M.* 2967, *Before J. C.* 1033.

his laudable ambition. He took care to have impartial juſtice adminiſtered at home, while he aſſerted his own juſt rights abroad by force of arms. In the wars he waged, he gloried not like other kings in the number of his chariots and horſemen; his truſt was in the Lord his God; prayer was his ſhield againſt the weapons of his enemies, and victory crowned his warlike expeditions. The Idumeans, the Philiſtines, the kings of Moab and Soba, the people of Amelec and Syria, were humbled by him, and made tributary to the crown of Iſrael. Notwithſtanding this ſucceſs, that attended David's arms, Hanon king of the Ammonites had the imprudence not only to reject his friendſhip, but alſo to provoke his enmity. Hanon was a young unexperienced prince, and ſon of Naas the late king of Ammon, from whom David had received many good ſervices during Saul's perſecutions. David wiſhed to cultivate the ſame friendſhip with the ſon, as had ſubſiſted between the father and him, and with that view ſent embaſſadors to compliment him upon his acceſſion to the throne. Hanon ſuffered himſelf to be perſuaded by evil counſellors, that the king of Iſrael's deſign was not to honour, but to betray the kingdom of Ammon, and that the embaſſadors were no more than ſpies, ſent to diſcover the ſtrength and nature of the country. Under that perſuaſion the raſh prince let himſelf be led aſtray, and without conſidering the conſequence ſeized upon the embaſſadors, ſhaved one half of their beard, clipt away half their garments, and bade them be gone. The report of this ſhameful treatment was quickly carried to David, who ſent to condole with his ſervants for the diſgrace they had ſuffered, and to deſire they would ſtop at Jericho, till their beard ſhould be grown again. His next care was to wipe off the diſhonour, which this affront to his embaſſadors had thrown upon himſelf and the whole Jewiſh nation. He ordered Joab to put himſelf at the head of his army and to march againſt the enemy. The Ammonites had foreſeen this ſtroke, and provided againſt it: they had ſent to their allies, and hired what forces they could out of Syria. Such troops, who had no other intereſt than

their pay to fight for, were not an equal match for the veteran troops of Iſrael. Joab, whoſe experience was equal to his courage, attacked and defeated them. Hanon did not deſpair; but recruiting his forces with new vigour, brought another formidable army into the field. Againſt an enemy, who had ſuch reſources, David thought it adviſeable to march in perſon, and by his preſence animate the Iſraelites to battle. They came to a general engagement; the Ammonites were routed with great ſlaughter: ſeven hundred of their armed chariots were deſtroyed with their combatants; forty thouſand of their foot and as many horſe fell in the field of battle, and fifty-eight thouſand more fled before the Iſraelites. A victory ſo complete diſcouraged the neighbouring nations from lending any further ſuccours to the king of Ammon; the Syrians laid down their arms, and ſubmitted to the conditions preſcribed by the conqueror. The young Hanon was then convinced of the imprudent ſtep he had taken; he ſaw his kingdom reduced to the brink of ruin, through the advice of wicked counſellors, and his own credulity. The riſe or the fall of empires often turns upon the nice point of good or bad advice. Happy is the prince, who being maſter of the affections of his ſubjects, has the diſcernment to chuſe, and the reſolution to ſupport thoſe, who are both capable and willing to ſerve him well.

§ LXV. *David's ſin.* 2 *Kings* 11.

THE Ammonites, notwithſtanding their late overthrow, were ſtill reſtleſs; ſome of them refuſed to lay down their arms, and Joab was ordered to march againſt them. David in the mean time remained at Jeruſalem, where amidſt the ſweets of domeſtic repoſe he met with a more fatal ſtroke, than ever he had to fear in the field of war. He was one day walking upon the platform of his palace about noon, and looking round him, happened to caſt his eye upon a woman, as ſhe was bathing herſelf upon *A. M.* 2969. *Before J. C.* 1031.

a terrace oppoſite to him. He beheld and coveted; he aſked, who ſhe was, and being told, that ſhe was called Bethſabee the wife of Urias, he ſent for her. The opening features of her beauty, as ſhe approached, added freſh fewel to his flame; he yielded to the wicked deſires of his heart; he ſolicited her conſent to the ſin of adultery, and obtained it. Bethſebee went home, and conceived; as her pregnancy advanced, ſhe began to conſider and apprehend its conſequences. She knew how ſevere the law was againſt a crime, of which ſhe knew herſelf guilty. The abſence of her huſband was a convincing proof of her infidelity; her guilt could not lie long concealed, but muſt neceſſarily become its own diſcoverer. Under thoſe circumſtances ſhe let David know the ſituation ſhe was in. David immediately diſpatched an order to Joab for Urias to be ſent home. Urias came, and, as if he had been only wanted to give ſome account of the war, the king aſked him ſeveral queſtions concerning the general and his army. He ſeemed ſatisfied with Urias's anſwers, bade him go home to ſleep with his wife, and ordered plenty of meat to be ſent after him. The hardy ſoldier, having no ſuſpicion of the king's deſign, never thought of going to his own houſe, but threw himſelf down to ſleep before the palace gate. David was informed of it, ſent for him again, and preſſed him to go home. Urias made him this noble reply: The Ark of God is lodged in nothing better than a tent; the warriors of Iſrael and Juda reſt upon the bare earth; Joab the general and all his army lie expoſed in the field, and ſhall I make merry, and ſleep with my wife? No, my Liege, I will not do it. David however kept him a day longer, and made him eat and drink plentifully in his preſence, hoping by that means to ſoften him into a compliance. Urias was inflexible, he paſſed the ſecond night, as he had paſſed the firſt upon his couch, and went not into his own houſe: upon which the king took the reſolution of adding a ſecond crime to the firſt: to cover the ſhame of his own guilt he reſolved upon the murder of the innocent and brave Urias. In other circumſtances David's natural goodneſs

of

of heart would have prompted him to reward the man for his behaviour, which on that occaſion determined him to ſacrifice his life by the ſword of Ammon. He ſent Urias back with a letter to Joab, and in that letter commanded Joab to place Urias in the front of the battle, and there leave him. The murderous order was literally executed: Urias fell by the ſword of the Ammonites, and Joab ſent a particular account of his death to David. David received the meſſage with as much ſeeming unconcern, as tho' he had had no ſhare in the horrid murder. Bethſabee mourned, as was the cuſtom, for her huſband's death; when the time of her mourning was paſt, ſhe became the king's wife, was introduced into his palace, and bore him a ſon, the iſſue of adultery.

The fall of David into two ſuch atrocious crimes is a deplorable inſtance of the inſtability of man; it proves that the moſt holy and moſt virtuous are never above the reach of temptation. However great their ſanctity may ſeem, and however tried their virtue may have been, they ſtill retain a tincture of that frail earth, out of which they were firſt formed. Such an inſtance of human infirmity muſt neceſſarily alarm the minds of thinking men; they, who ſtand, can never promiſe themſelves ſecurity, and the weak muſt tremble, when they ſee the ſtrong thus overthrown. The crime of David is recorded in holy writ, not as an excuſe for ſin, or as an example to be followed, but as a caution, that all may be upon their guard, leſt by preſuming too much they chance to fall into the like misfortune.

§ LXVI. *David's repentance.* 2 *Kings* 12.

DAVID, who by a weakneſs inherent in human nature had fallen into the abyſs of ſin, ſtood in need of more than his own natural force to enable him to riſe. So malignant was the wound he had received in his ſoul, that he ſeemed as unconcerned at his guilt, as tho' he were *A. M.* 2970, *Before J. C.* 1030.

were not conſcious of what he had done. For a whole year he remained unmindful of his duty, and forgetful of his God, neither repenting nor ſuing for forgiveneſs of his crime. God in his mercy beheld him with an eye of pity, and ſent Nathan his prophet to him. Nathan, whoſe prudence was equal to his zeal, ſaw how delicate a point he had to manage: his prince was to be made ſenſible of his duty, and yet not offended: the truth was to be enforced and the ſinner roused from a ſtate of inſenſibility, and yet nothing ſaid, that might exaſperate the king's temper. The prophet then began, as tho' he meant no more than to inform the king of a certain rich man, who having his friend to entertain, would not kill any ſheep or oxen of his own, of which he had plenty, but took from a poor man his favorite and only ewe, which he ordered to be killed and prepared for his own table. The very mention of an action ſo unjuſt and cruel raiſed a laudable indignation in David's breaſt, who had no ſuſpicion, that the caſe regarded himſelf. Blind to his own cruelty and injuſtice he pronounced the rich man's condemnation, and in that pronounced his own. He deſerves to die, ſaid the king, whoever the man may be, who has done ſo baſe an action. You are the man, replied the prophet; you are he, whom the Lord has anointed king of Iſrael, whom he has delivered from the hands of Saul, to whom he has granted victory, power, wealth, and a peaceable poſſeſſion of the throne of Iſrael and Juda. But for theſe, and ſtill greater favours, that the Lord has in ſtore, what return have you made? How have you repaid them, and in what manner have you teſtified your gratitude? Was it in the embraces of an adultereſs? In the murder of Urias, or in the marriage of Bethſabee? For this cauſe the ſword ſhall be drawn within the wall of your own houſe, and from your own children evils ſhall ariſe to puniſh the contempt, which you have put upon the Lord. The king's heart was touched: his conſcience witneſſed the juſtneſs of Nathan's reproach; he acknowledged the truth, and was not diſpleaſed to hear it. Without aſking, as Saint Auſtin obſerves,

ſerves, how a ſubject could thus preſume to ſcrutanize the actions and arraign the conduct of his prince, he liſtened in humble ſilence, and for the moment forgetting himſelf to be a king acknowledged himſelf a ſinner more ſincere than Saul, he cried out, I have ſinned. He expreſſed no more, than what he felt; he expreſſed the real ſorrow of a contrite heart. In the ſpirit of repentance he humbly ſubmitted to the chaſtiſement, which Nathan on the part of God propheſied againſt him and his family. Overwhelmed with grief, and yet borne up by hope, as Saint Chryſoſtom takes notice, he reſigned himſelf to ſufferings, as the only means of attoning for his ſin, and obtaining forgiveneſs. David was no ſooner made ſenſible of his guilt, than he exerted all the powers of his ſoul to blot it out: he never ceaſed to ſhed the tears of penance, till he ceaſed to live. David in his fall, ſays Saint Ambroſe, has been imitated by many, in his repentance but by few.

§ LXVII. *Afflictions of David.* 2 *Kings* 13.

DAVID ſoon began to feel the puniſhments, which Nathan had pronounced upon him: theſe puniſhments were a temporal ſatisfaction due to the divine juſtice, even after the guilt of ſin had been remitted by contrition. The firſt ſtroke of juſtice, that fell upon the guilty king, was the death of his little ſon by Bethſebee. He was fond of the guiltleſs infant; he prayed that its life might be prolonged; he added tears and faſting to his prayers; but God's decree was not to be reverted. The ſtroke was after that extended to his other children. His daughter Thamar was raviſhed by her brother Amnon; and Amnon in revenge was murdered by his brother Abſalom at an entertainment, which the murderer had prepared for his brothers, as a cover to his deſign. Abſalom upon this was obliged to fly from his father's anger, and condemned himſelf to a voluntary baniſhment for three years. Being maſter of much cunning, *A. M.* 2972, *Before J. C.* 1028.

ning and a great diſſembler, he gained Joab's confidence, and by his mediation having recovered the king's good graces, became as much a favorite, as ever he had been before. This goodneſs of a fond parent ought to have inſured a mutual return of affection from the ſon. But goodneſs has ſeldom any influence upon a bad heart. The ungrateful ſon was no farther ſenſible of his father's goodneſs towards him, than as it enabled him to promote his own ambitious deſigns. He had fixed his eye upon the crown, and entertained himſelf with the hopes of taking it from his father's brow to place it upon his own. Full of that wicked project he began to wind himſelf into the affections of the courtiers and officers; he affected great popularity, promiſed what great things he would do to ſerve his people, if he were only king; he gained Achitophel, David's prime counſellor of ſtate; by ſubtle arts and flatteries he ſeduced many of the king's ſervants from their allegiance, and increaſed his party by degrees, till he thought himſelf ſufficiently ſtrong to make good his pretenſions. Under the pretext of a vow, which he ſaid he had made during his baniſhment in the town of Geſſur, he aſked his father's leave to go to Hebron. Upon his arrival at that city he erected the ſtandard of rebellion, and declared himſelf king. Great were the numbers, that flocked to his banner. The news of an inſurrection ſo unexpected and unnatural ſhocked the good king to ſuch a degree, that he knew not whom to truſt, or what meaſures to purſue. He had no more than ſix hundred guards to oppoſe againſt the rebels, and was afraid of being beſieged in his own city: too feeble to reſiſt he had no proſpect of ſaving himſelf but by flight. His policy was to gain what time he could, and give his ſubjects an opportunity to ſhow themſelves in his defence. With that deſign he called together the few faithful friends he had about him, marched out of Jeruſalem, paſſed over the torrent of Cedron, and made his retreat up the mountain of Olives. As he approached Bahurim, he was met by Semei, one of Saul's kindred, who reviled him in the moſt abuſive language, and threw ſtones at his followers. His followers willed to revenge

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the inſult, as it deſerved. But the humble penitent, who conſidered this revolt of his ſubjects, as the effect and puniſhment of his own revolt againſt God, not only forbade any hurt to be done to the reviler, but with all patience received his inſults, as from the miniſter of divine juſtice. Abſalom in the interim made a triumphant entry into Jeruſalem with Achitophel by his ſide, the prompter of his ſchemes, and director of all his motions. By this traitor's advice he erected a public tent, and in the face of the ſun violated his father's wives. It was a crime of the moſt atrocious nature; but it was a chaſtiſement due to the injury, that David himſelf had offered to Urias, and what had been particularly ſpecified by the prophet Nathan. In all his afflictions the humbled prince ſaw, how proportioned his chaſtiſement was to the nature of his ſin, how viſibly the wicked diſorders of his family reſembled the paſt diſorders of his ſoul, and how juſtly his own ungrateful rebellion againſt God was now puniſhed by the rebellion of his ſon and ſubjects againſt their king. By experience he became convinced, that the greateſt grace God can ſhow a ſinner, is not to ſpare him here, that he may ſpare eternally, as Saint Auſtin ſays. For the malignity of ſin cannot, conſiſtently with juſtice, be ſuffered to go unpuniſhed; the meaſure of divine juſtice muſt ſome way or other be completed; ſooner or later full atonement muſt be made either in this life or in the next. To make full ſatisfaction, and to deſerve a full diſcharge, the ſinner has no other choice, than by voluntary chaſtiſements, or by a voluntary ſubmiſſion to ſuch chaſtiſements, as God ſhall pleaſe to inflict upon him.

§ LXVIII. *Death of Abſalom.* 2 *Kings* 18.

ABSALOM being maſter of the royal city, conſulted his council of war, in what manner he ſhould purſue this firſt ſtroke of his good fortune. Achitophel, the moſt able of his counſellors, was for vigorous meaſures; and *A. M.* 2981. *Before J. C.* 1019.

had his advice been followed, it muſt have ended in the total ruin of the king, who had not yet drawn his troops together. But a ſuperior wiſdom preſided over thoſe deliberations, and directed them to a better end. Chuſai, who was ſecretly in David's intereſt, being called upon by Abſalom to deliver his opinion, differed from Achitophel, and refuted his advice. He repreſented the danger of driving men at once into deſpair; that a ſmall body of deſperate warriors, ſuch as David's were, was capable of great achievements, and not to be reduced by force; that Abſalom's party being but lately formed, could not have that ſteadineſs which is requiſite to carry a difficult attack; and if ſome of them ſhould chance to fall in the attempt, that the reſt might grow diſheartened, and turn the ſcale of war againſt him. This opinion prevailed, and Achitophel for once was not attended to. This ſlight, as he thought it, had ſuch an effect upon the mind of that haughty miniſter, that he immediately went home, and by a violent death put an end to his life. Chuſai contrived to give David notice of the diſpoſitions, that Abſalom was making to march againſt him, and adviſed him to croſs the river Jordan. David followed the advice, and having drawn a reſpectable body of troops together, reſolved to give the rebels battle. His innate courage prompted him to lead them on in perſon; but his truſty officers, who knew how much depended on a life ſo precious, would not ſuffer him to expoſe it in the field. He yielded to their reaſons, and gave the command to Joab, with the ſtricteſt orders to preſerve the life of Abſalom. Abſalom had taken the field with an army much ſuperior in number to that of the royaliſts. The two armies came to an engagement in the foreſt of Ephraim: the rebels were defeated, twenty thouſand of them remained dead upon the ſpot, the reſt with Abſalom endeavoured to ſave themſelves by flight. Abſalom was remarkable for a long flowing head of hair, and being hurried away by the confuſion, he then was in, rode under a thick ſpreading oak to avoid the enemy: his hair entangled itſelf in the boughs, and his mule going on left him hanging in that condition.

on. He was discovered by some of the royal party, but out of deference to the king's order no one presumed to lift his arm against him. Joab was informed of his situation, and hastened to the spot. Void of that delicacy of sentiment, which his men had expressed, he took three lances in his hand, and struck them all into the heart of the unhappy prince, as he hung. The head of the rebellion being thus cut off, he ordered the signal to be given for a retreat, and no more blood to be spilt. Messengers were immediately dispatched to give the king notice of his success. David's first question was, whether his son Absalom was safe? And being told, that he was dead, his countenance fell, and the tears gushed from his eyes. The untimely fall of a darling, tho' rebellious son, damped the joy of victory: he shut himself up in his apartment, and the day, so glorious to his arms, and so advantageous to his subjects, was changed into mourning. Joab, who had expected to see the people rejoicing for the success he had had in suppressing the rebellion, took great offence at this behaviour of the king. With the freedom of a brave but rugged soldier, he broke in upon his sovereign, and reproached him for the little concern he seemed to have for his friends and faithful subjects. He told him, how ill this grief became him on the day of triumph, that it shamed the faces of his victorious servants, who had saved his life, and the lives of his sons and daughters, that he seemed to love none but those, who hated him, that his nobles were by this convinced, how little he cared for them, and how pleased he had been, if they instead of Absalom had perished in the field: he moreover added, that if he did not rise and show himself to the satisfaction of his faithful servants, they were ready to abandon him, and that before the end of night he would not have so much as one man remaining by his side. Compelled by these harsh remonstrances of Joab, the king arose and sat in the gate: the people flocked round to see him, and profess their allegiance. But notwithstanding these public testimonies of his loyal subjects, David's breast still heaved with sorrow at the remembrance of his slaughtered

ſon Abſalom. The ingratitude, the treachery, the rebellion, the murder, and the inceſts of an unnatural ſon, could not extinguiſh the firſt flame of a father's affection. David was ſtill fond of Abſalom, and in ſhedding his tears over the breathleſs corpſe, bitterly lamented the more laſting death of the ſoul.

§ LXIX. *Death of Siba.* 2 *Kings* 20.

A. M. 2981, *Before J. C.* 1019. THE death of Abſalom put an end to the rebellion: the men of Juda and Iſrael ſtrove to out-do each other in honouring their king, whom they accompanied in great crouds on his triumphal return to Jeruſalem. They, who had been the moſt active againſt their ſovereign in his diſgrace, were the firſt to profeſs their allegiance after victory. It is what ſelf-intereſt uſually inſpires into every traitor, when he finds himſelf too weak to do more miſchief. Conſcious of his guilt, and apprehenſive of puniſhment, Semei amongſt the reſt came to throw himſelf at the feet of his much-injured prince. The appearance of that inſolent rebel raiſed an honeſt indignation in the breaſts of all, who ſaw him; they begged the king would give them leave to revenge his outrageous inſults and to waſh off the ſtain in the reviler's blood. The meek and penitential diſpoſition of the king's mind would not ſuffer him to grant any ſuch requeſt, nor permit the glory of his victory to be tarniſhed by the death of any one of his ſubjects. Miphiboſeth, the ſon of Jonathan, clothed with the garb of miſery and diſtreſs, preſented himſelf at the ſame time. He came not to implore the royal clemency on account of any crime he had done: for to him David had declared himſelf a friend for his father's ſake, and confirmed his title to the family inheritance of Saul his grandfather; he came to demand juſtice againſt his ſervant, whoſe name was Siba. This wicked man during the late troubles had perſuaded David, that Miphiboſeth his maſter entertained hopes of recovering the crown, which

Saul had loſt, and for that purpoſe was ſoliciting the favour of the people in Jeruſalem. David was not then at leiſure to examine into the grounds of that accuſation, ſuppoſed the ſtory to be true, and diſpoſſeſſed Miphiboſeth of his eſtate, and gave it to his faithleſs ſervant. It was to recover his eſtate and to clear his character, that Miphiboſeth then appeared before the king. He was happy enough to juſtify his own conduct and to detect the impoſture of his ſervant, but thro' a ſtrange fatality too often attending kings and men in power, could prevail upon David to reſtore no more than half of his eſtate: the ſlanderer was allowed to remain in quiet poſſeſſion of the other half. Miphiboſeth could not forbear ſhowing ſome little diſpleaſure at the treatment he received, tho' he peaceably acquieſced to the king's deciſion. Siba, being thus ſecured in the enjoyment of his ill-gotten wealth, made uſe of it to plunge the nation back into the frightful horrors of a civil war. Being naturally bold and turbulent, he ſounded the trumpet of revolt, and by his diſcourſe perſuaded all the tribes, excepting that of Juda, to take up arms againſt the ſon of Iſai: for ſo he contemptuouſly ſtiled the king. David, who by the paſt had been taught to fear the conſequences of every popular commotion, exerted himſelf with vigour to quaſh the evil, if he could, before it ſhould riſe to any height. He ſent for Amaſa, whom he had reſolved to employ on this occaſion in the place of Joab, ordered him to collect what troops he could, and to march in three days time againſt the rebels. Amaſa was ſlow in his operations; David grew uneaſy at this delay, and apprehending the advantage, which an active enemy might draw from it, ordered Abiſai and his brother Joab to lead their part of the troops into the field. Joab was ready at a moment's warning, tho' much out of humour on account of the preference, which had been firſt given to Amaſa. He put his army into motion, and Amaſa joined him upon the march. As they had been always friends, Amaſa went up to ſalute him without the leaſt ſuſpicion of any ill-will, that Joab had againſt him. Joab returned his civility with an equal ſhow of friendſhip,

friendship, but as he embraced him with one hand, traitorously stabbed him with the other. Siba fled at the approach of an army, which had been used to conquer, and shut himself up in the town of Abela. Joab pursued him, and laid close siege to the place, being determined not to leave it, till he had the traitor in his possession. A woman from the rampart asked him, Why he that turned his arms against the cities of Israel? He answered, that his arms were pointed at none but Siba, the ringleader of the rebels. She reported his answer to the people of the city, who by her persuasion cut off Siba's head, and threw it over the wall. Joab wanted nothing more; he immediately raised the siege, and peace was restored to Israel.

Joab was a gallant officer, and had rendered great services to his king and country. His character exhibits one of those ambitious men, who are not afraid of exposing their lives in a battle, who will execute their prince's orders with a becoming promptitude and courage, but will at times make it appear, that they have likewise their own glory and personal interest in view. Tho' Joab's fidelity, in what regarded the essential service of his country, cannot be impeached, yet his inattention to please, his rudeness of behaviour, and boldness of speech to the king himself, made him a very troublesome, tho' loyal, subject. The murder of Abner and Amasa, in cold blood, and the barbarous assassination of Absalom, whom he had express orders to spare, are indelible blots in his character. But notwithstanding all his defects and insolence, David left him all command of his armies as long as he lived. With the spirit of an humble penitent he bore the insults of a rude subject, reflecting that he himself for the sake of gratifying a lawless passion, had outrageously insulted the sovereign of the universe, from whom he had received nothing but favours and unmerited preferment.

§ LXI.

§ LXX. *David chaſtiſed by peſtilence.* 2 Kings 24.

A. M. 2988, Before J. C. 1012. SCARCE had David begun to breathe from thoſe public and domeſtic evils, which had wearied him ever ſince his ſin with Bethſhabee; ſcarce had he begun to taſte the ſweets of peace, when he fell into new troubles, and experienced freſh calamities. The penitent and the virtuous David ſtill was man, ſtill expoſed to temptation and liable to ſin. He had firſt been led aſtray by luſt; his vanity now ſeduces him into a ſecond fault. Vanity is a ſubtle vice; it is to be apprehended even by the beſt of men; it inſpired David to learn the number of his ſubjects. Joab oppoſed it as an idle project, and very juſtly ſaid, that for a prince it was enough to beg the bleſſing of God upon his ſubjects, without being inquiſitive to know their number. But the king was poſitive: he nominated the commiſſioners, who for near ten months were employed in running over the whole country, and regiſtering the inhabitants. By the liſts, delivered in by Joab to the king, it appeared that the number of the Jewiſh people amounted to thirteen hundred thouſand fighting men, five hundred thouſand of which were comprized in the ſingle tribe of Juda. Tho' Joab ſeems not to have given in the real number, which, according to the book of Chronicles, amounted to near three hundred thouſand men more, beſides thoſe of Levi and Benjamin, who were not numbered; becauſe, as the Scripture ſays, Joab unwillingly executed the king's orders. David had ſatisfied his vanity; he knew the number of his ſubjects, and ſaw his folly: he ſtood not in need of a prophet, as he did before, to make him ſenſible of the ſin he had committed. Stung with remorſe he publicly acknowledged himſelf guilty, and humbly beſought the Lord to pardon him. Unmindful of his royal dignity, unleſs it was to humble himſelf at the reflection of its having led him into temptation, he thought of nothing but repentance; the prophet Gad came to him on the part of God, not to declare the pardon of his ſin without his being

puniſhed

punished for it, but to propose which of the three punishments he would chuse, famine, war, or pestilence. The penitent king, judging it more expedient to fall into the hands of God, than into the hands of men, chose pestilence. The pestilence began, and raged with such violence, that in three days time it carried off no fewer than seventy thousand persons. To see such numbers of his subjects so suddenly snatched out of life on his account, David was more sensibly afflicted, than if the whole punishment had fallen singly upon himself. Penetrated with the most tender feelings for his suffering people, he wept and prayed the whole time. It is I, said he to Almighty God, it is I, who have sinned: I have done the evil, and why do my people suffer? Rather turn thy anger, O my God, and let thy vengeance fall upon me. Such was the king's prayer: the fervour that accompanied it, extinguished the divine anger: the exterminating Angel stopt his hand, and the evil ceased.

By this example we see, and the holy Fathers remark the same, that as Almighty God sometimes punishes his people for the sins of those, by whom they are governed, so he often spares for the sake of those, who strive by their prayers to disarm his justice and obtain his mercy.

§ LXXI. *Salomon king.* 3 *Kings* 1.

A. M. 2989. *Before J. C.* 1011. DAVID was now almost worn out with sufferings and infirmities of age. His visible decline of life awakened the expectations of his aspiring sons. They had all their eye upon the throne, and no one was without hope. Adonias, the eldest of the brothers, seemed determined to be before-hand with the rest. This ambitious prince having taken care to engage in his interest some of the leading men in the kingdom, prepared a splendid entertainment for his friends, that they might take that opportunity to proclaim him king. Nathan had intelligence of the plot, and being interested for Salomon, whom

whom the king intended for his ſucceſſor, communicated it to Bethſabee, adviſing her to go immediately to the king, and remind him of his promiſe in favour of her ſon. She readily followed his inſtructions, and while ſhe was yet ſpeaking to David concerning his ſucceſſor, in came the prophet, as if it had been by chance, and reſpectfully begged to know, if by his royal will Adonias had been called to the throne? Alarmed at the queſtion, David gave immediate orders for his ſon Salomon to be anointed and inthroned. Sadoc the High-prieſt, and Nathan the prophet, loſt no time in the execution of this order. The ceremony was ſolemnly performed in Gihon, and Salomon by ſound of trumpet was proclaimed king, before any of the adverſe party had the leaſt ſuſpicion of it. By this ſtroke Adonias ſaw an end put to his ſchemes at once; his partiſans abandoned him to ſave themſelves, and he a ſuppliant criminal fled to the altar, as his only refuge. Salomon pardoned him for what was paſt, and promiſed, that no harm ſhould befall him, as long as he remained within the bounds of duty. David in the interim was haſtening towards his end; a deadly chill had benumbed his limbs, and no covering of clothes could keep him warm. Abiſag, a comely virgin in the bloom of youth, was choſen out to nurſe and cheriſh the decrepit king and to ſleep in his boſom. David perceiving the time of his diſſolution was drawing nigh, called to him his ſon Salomon, and gave him ſuch inſtructions, as he judged neceſſary for his future conduct in the government of the realm: he recommended to him a religious obſervance of the law, as it is written in the book of Moyſes, a fidelity in his duty to God, and equity in the adminiſtration of juſtice amongſt his ſubjects: he moreover gave him a ſolemn charge to build a temple to the Lord the God of Iſrael, which he had much deſired, but had not been permitted to do himſelf, telling him, that he had already prepared materials, workmen, and money for the building: he concluded with ſome inſtructions of a private nature relative to Joab and Semei; after which he ſlept with his foreſathers, in a good old age, full of days, and riches

and glory, and was buried in his own city, which henceforward became the burying-place of the kings of Juda.

Semei at firſt experienced great lenity from the new king, but his diſobedience at the end of three years drew upon him the puniſhment, which had been long due to his former inſolence. The innocent blood of Amaſa and Abner had for many years cried for vengeance againſt Joab. The conſpiracy of this general with Adonias againſt the preſent king, called down the ſtroke at laſt, which the late king had ſuſpended during his own life. For Adonias after the demiſe of his father had reſumed his pretenſions to the throne, and had demanded Abiſag in marriage. Salomon ſaw into his deſigns, and cut off his pretenſions at once by depriving him of life. Some time after Almighty God appeared to Salomon in a dream, and promiſed to grant him, whatever favour he ſhould aſk. Salomon turned his thoughts upon the favours, which his father David and he had already received from the divine hand, and conſidering himſelf now raiſed to a dignity, which, the higher it was, expoſed him the more to difficulties, he ſaw that great prudence would be requiſite for the right government of a great people, and therefore begged of God to grant him Wiſdom. His choice proved him worthy of the gift he aſked. God was pleaſed with his petition, and to a wiſdom ſuperlatively greater, than had yet been, or ſhould be granted to any man beſides, he added riches and glory ſuperior to what any king had poſſeſſed before him.

By the example of this wiſe prince Chriſtians are inſtructed, what in their choice they are to eſteem, and what to prefer. Riches, honours, and the pleaſures of life, may well conſtitute the wiſh of an idolater, or of an infidel, who knows no other happineſs, than what affects his ſenſes; but on a Chriſtian truly wiſe, who conſiders the dignity of an immortal ſoul, thoſe tranſient objects make no laſting impreſſion. Being taught from his earlieſt years, that he has been created not only to ſerve, but to poſſeſs the God, whom he adores, he aims at riches, honours, and glory, infinitely more excellent,

cellent, than what this world can give. He aſpires to the kingdom of Heaven; he ſtudies the virtues, that muſt gain him his Creator's love, and entitle him to a crown, which no ruſt ſhall ever tarniſh, and no time conſume. To ſeek the kingdom of God and his juſtice, is the perfection of true Chriſtian wiſdom, and true wiſdom is the ſource of every other good gift, that deſcends to us from the Father of lights.

§ LXXII. *Deciſion of Salomon.* 3 *Kings* 3.

SALOMON immediately began to diſplay the talents, with which God had bleſſed him: an occaſion offered, in which he gave ſuch a ſpecimen of his wiſdom, as excited the admiration and gained him the eſteem of all his ſubjects. Two women of evil fame came before him to beg he would decide a matter of diſpute between them. This woman and I, ſaid one of them to the king, dwelt in the ſame houſe, where both of us within the ſpace of three days were ſeparately delivered of a male child. She unfortunately happened to ſmother hers in the night, as ſhe lay aſleep. She roſe ſilently out of bed, and undiſcovered ſtole from me my babe, leaving her own dead child in the place of it. In the morning when I woke, I roſe with an intent to give my infant ſuck, and to my ſurpriſe found a dead child by my ſide. I fixed my eyes upon the breathleſs body, and conſidering him more diligently when it was clear day, I plainly ſaw the infant was not mine. To this the other woman made reply, by charging her with a malicious falſehood, and claiming the living child, as her own. They both went on for ſome time to diſpute the matter with an equal degree of poſitiveneſs, the one as ſtrenuouſly denying what the other as ſtrenuouſly affirmed. Nothing could be collected in favour of one ſide more than of the other; no information could be gathered from any witneſs; the accident had happened in a private houſe, and under the cover of a dark night. To diſcover the truth

A. M. 2991. *Before J. C.* 1009.

under ſuch perplexing circumſtances required the ſagacity of a Salomon, who by his conduct on this occaſion ſhowed himſelf poſſeſſed of a wiſdom, which ſaw into the ſecrets of all nature, not only with reſpect to plants, trees, and animals, as the Scripture teſtifies of him, but alſo with reſpect to men, by diving into the deep receſſes of the human heart, and diſcloſing the hidden movements of a mother's love. The king having ſent for a ſword, ordered the child to be divided in two, and half to be given to the one and half to the other. The pretended mother ſtood ſilent on hearing the ſentence, while the other melting into tears of tenderneſs for her helpleſs infant, earneſtly cried out, I beſeech thee, my Lord, give her the child alive, and do not kill it. Nature there ſpoke, and palpably diſcovered her to be the true mother of the child. Salomon therefore ordered him to be delivered to her. The deciſion gave univerſal ſatisfaction, and all Iſrael admired the wiſe ingenuity of the king.

Diſputes muſt inevitably happen, where men are influenced by different principles, and have a different intereſt to purſue: and in thoſe diſputes the like difference of conduct will often appear, as appeared between the two mothers in their pretenſions to the ſurviving child. The man, who is blinded by jealouſy or ſelf-love, often attributes to his neighbour the very evils, of which he himſelf has been the cauſe; he cares but little, what diſturbance he may give, or into what confuſion he may throw his neighbours, as long as he either gains his ends, or prevents his rival from gaining his; while the good Chriſtian, whoſe principle is Charity, is as moderate in his proceedings, as he is ſteady in his claim. Void of animoſity he purſues his right, that juſtice may be done; but when that right can no longer be inſiſted upon without injuring the innocent, he drops his purſuit, and conſoles himſelf for whatever loſs he ſuffers, in the teſtimony of an upright conſcience.

End of the fourth age,

Fifth

Fifth age of the world.

From the foundation of Salomon's temple 2992, to the end of the Jewish captivity under Cyrus 3468, containing the space of 476 years.

§ I. *Temple of Salomon.* 3 *Kings* 6.

THE reign of Salomon was a reign of peace and of every temporal felicity. The immense riches of the prince flowed in upon his subjects, and each one, as the Scripture says, reposed without fear under the shade of his own vine and figtree. Gold was in such plenty, that no one concerned himself about it, and silver was as common, as the stones, that lay heaped upon the ground. All the effusion of magnificence, which the greatest princes have at any time displayed, falls far short of that, which the Scripture relates of king Salomon. For the daily supply of his table he had upwards of a thousand bushels of fine flower, according to the computation of measures, and double that quantity of common meal; thirty oxen, and a hundred sheep; besides a prodigious multitude of stags, roe-bucks, buffles, and fatted fowls. He kept forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand for the saddle, all regularly fed and arranged in the fairest order. The peace, that smiled over all the land, was both the cause and consequence of this surprising plenty. Being thus blessed with peace, and free from the very apprehensions of war, Salomon resolved to execute the design, which his religious father had minutely described and earnestly recommended to him before he died: it was to build a temple in honour of the living God. He made an agreement

A. M. 2992, *Before J. C.* 1008.

agreement with Hiram king of Tyre to ſupply him with firs and cedars for that purpoſe from mount Libanon: he called out the ableſt workmen and artificers of his own ſubjects to the number of thirty thouſand: eighty thouſand men were ſet to hew out ſtones and ſhape them for the maſons, and ſeventy thouſand more were conſtantly employed in carrying the materials, as they were wanted: beſides theſe, there were three thouſand three hundred overſeers, who had nothing elſe to do, but to inſpect each department and direct the whole. The dimenſions of the Temple contained three ſcore cubits in length, twenty in breadth, and thirty in height: a porch was erected in the front, twenty cubits long, ten broad, and a hundred and twenty high. Adjoining the walls round about the Temple lay ſeveral courts and ranges of chambers, in three ſtories one above another, for different uſes. A cedar partition from top to bottom, with two folding doors richly carved and gilt, divided the grand dome into two unequal parts; the firſt of which meaſured forty cubits in length, and was called the Sanctuary; the ſecond meaſured twenty cubits, and was called the Holy of Holies. The inſide of both diviſions was covered with cedar and deal planks twenty cubits high, embelliſhed with carvings in relievo gilt, and wrought with cherubims and palm-trees, and divers figures, that ſtood projecting out of the wall. The ceiling was carried up from thence with cedar boards in the form of an arch riſing ten cubits in the centre. The floor was paved with beautiful and precious marble, the walls and ceiling both of the oracle and ſanctuary were plated with the pureſt gold, and the plates were faſtened on with nails of gold. Salomon laid the foundations of the Temple in the fourth year of his reign, and compleated it in the eleventh, which was the twenty-ninth of his age and the three thouſandth of the world; being the firſt happy man, who erected a Temple to the true God; a Temple ſo rich and upon ſo grand a ſcale, that the world at that time had ſeen nothing comparable to it.

Happy

Happy had Salomon been indeed, ſays Saint Ambroſe, if he had at the ſame time been careful to ground himſelf in the virtue of humility: but after having built a temple of ſtones and timber in his youth, he in an advanced age ſhamefully profaned the living temple of his own body. By an example the moſt deplorable he is a warning to thoſe Chriſtians, who content themſelves with ſome of the ſhining works of virtue, as if nothing more were wanting to make them really good: the ground of true virtue, in which conſiſts the happineſs of man in this life, as Saint Auſtin remarks, is to be humble. Salomon in the midſt of worldly greatneſs fell into diſgrace with his Creator, and by the ſubſequent ſhame of unbridled luſt tarniſhed the glory of his former deeds.

§ II. *Furniture of the Temple.* 2 *Chron.* 3, 4.

THE images of two Cherubims ten cubits high, made of olive-wood and overlaid with gold, were ſet in the midſt of the inner temple. They ſtood upright facing the Sanctuary with their wings ſtretched forth in ſuch a manner, that one wing of each Cherub touched the oppoſite wall, and the other two wings joined one another in the midſt of the Temple, each wing being five cubits long. A veil of violet, purple, ſcarlet and ſilk, decorated with Cherubims richly wrought, hung againſt the partition, that incloſed the Holy of Holies. In the Sanctuary ſtood the altar of incenſe, which was made of cedar covered with gold, and ten golden candleſticks, five and five on each ſide, with their lamps to give light before the oracle. There were moreover ten tables, covered with gold, for the loaves of ſhow-bread, cenſers alſo and veſſels for the perfumes, bowls, and mortars of pure gold, with vaſt quantities of other ſacred furniture for the divine ſervice. In the court before the Temple was the brazen altar of holocauſts, ten cubits high, twenty long, and as many broad. Ten large lavers of braſs, curiouſly graven and ornamented with feſtoons & figures

A. M. 3000, *Before J. C.* 1000,

of

of different animals, stood five and five on each side for the convenience of washing all such things, as were to be offered in holocaust. On the right side over-against the east towards the south was placed the molten sea, so called on account of its prodigious size. It was made of founded brass, measuring ten cubits from brim to brim, five in height, and thirty in circumference. It was supported by twelve brazen oxen, of which three looked to the east, three to the west, three towards the north, and three towards the south: the use of this immense laver was for purifying the priests before the daily performance of their sacerdotal functions. A vessel of this sort, but of a much inferior size, had by Moyses been made of copper, and placed between the altar and the tabernacle, that the priests might there wash their hands & feet, as often as they went in and out of the sanctuary. Hence it is imagined, that whenever the sacrifice of incense was offered, the priests approached bare foot to the altar of perfumes, and were therefore bound by a special law to purify themselves in the sacred laver under pain of death.

From this external purity, which was required as a necessary preparation for those ancient sacrifices, that were no more than a figure of what was to come, it is easy to conclude, what purity both of body and soul God expects from those, who are his priests and the ministers of his altar in the law of grace. For since it is almost impossible for them, while they converse with men, as Saint Gregory observes, to be wholly spotless in their actions and affections, which are indicated by the hands and feet, they must have recourse to the purifying laver of compunction and humility of heart, that their souls may be cleansed from sin; that they never may approach the holy altar, nor partake of the sacred mysteries but with respect, and as far as human frailty will permit, with a purity resembling that of Angels.

§ III.

§. III. *Dedication of the Temple.* 3 *Kings* 8.

WHEN Salomon had finiſhed the Temple, and furniſhed it with every requiſite both for uſe and ornament, he prepared for the ſolemnity of its dedication. To render the ceremony as awful, as he could, he publiſhed an order for his ſubjects to attend on the ninth day of the ſeventh month. All the ancients of Iſrael, the heads of the families, and princes of the tribes obeyed the ſummons. They advanced to the city of David, on mount Sion, where the Ark of the Covenant had been placed by that religious king, the prieſts reſpectfully took it up, and the Levites carried the veſſels, and all other furniture, that had been in the Tabernacle of Moyſes. The king himſelf walked in proceſſion before the Ark, which was carried upon prieſts ſhoulders, and ſet down in its place in the Holy of Holies under the wings of the Cherubims. There was nothing in the Ark beſides the two tables of ſtone, engraven with the ten commandments, which Moyſes put there at mount Horeb, when he came out of the land of Egypt. When the prieſts were out of the Sanctuary, the Levites and ſinging men under the direction of Aſaph, Heman and Idithun, began to play upon their cymbals and pſalteries and harps on the eaſt ſide of the altar, and with them a hundred and twenty prieſts ſounding with trumpets. The air reſounded far and near with the loud concert of voices and inſtruments, and when they began to ſing the words, *Give glory to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever*, the houſe of God was filled with a cloud, nor could the prieſts ſtand to miniſter on account of the cloud. Upon which Salomon ſaid, The Lord promiſed that he would dwell in a cloud, and turning his face towards the people, bleſſed the whole multitude of Iſrael, as he ſtood upon the brazen ſcaffold, which he had ſet up on that occaſion in the middle of the Temple before the altar of the Lord. Then kneeling down, and lifting up his hands towards Heaven in fervent prayer, he

A. M. 3001, *Before J. C.* 999.

he begged the Almighty to ſhower down his choiceſt bleſſings upon the people of Iſrael, to grant the petitions of thoſe, who ſhould come into that Temple to adore him, and to let his anger be appeaſed by the repentance of thoſe, who ſhould there confeſs their ſins to him. He earneſtly beſought the divine goodneſs, that the people might there find an aſſured refuge in the day of affliction, a ſafe defence againſt the fury of their enemies, and a comfortable reſource from every calamity of peſtilence and famine: that he would look graciouſly upon his humble ſupplicants, and grant every kind of happineſs to thoſe, who ſhould at any time call upon his name in that holy place. The king had no ſooner ended his prayer, than fire came down from Heaven, and conſumed the holocauſts, and the majeſty of the Lord filled the Temple. The whole aſſembly fell proſtrate upon the ground at the ſight, and adored and praiſed the Lord, *Becauſe he is good, becauſe his mercy endureth for ever.* The feſtivity laſted fourteen days, during which time Salomon offered no fewer than twenty-two thouſand oxen, and one hundred and twenty thouſand rams, in ſacrifice to the living God.

The holy Fathers in their reflections upon Salomon's magnificence on this ſolemn occaſion, remark how incomparably greater is the reſpect due to our Chriſtian churches, wherein reſides the very truth, of which the Jewiſh Temple had nothing more than the ſhadow. For let us open the heavens, and look into the heaven of heavens, ſays Saint Chryſoſtom, we ſhall find nothing more holy, nothing greater, than what Jeſus Chriſt himſelf has placed upon our altars.

§ IV. *Queen of Saba.* 3 *Kings* 10.

A. M. 3013, *Before J. C.* 987. AS ſoon as Salomon had completed and conſecrated his Temple to Almighty God, he began to build a palace for himſelf, which he planned and finiſhed in ſo grand a ſtile, that it became a ſubject of admiration to the

the many that flocked to ſee it. Salomon was in quiet poſſeſſion of the whole tract of country, which Almighty God had promiſed to the race of Abraham, and not an enemy was near to diſturb his peaceful reign. From diſtant nations, from all kings of the earth ſtrangers came to ſee the works, and to hear the wiſdom of a man, who was univerſally looked upon as the wonder and glory of his age. Of the many foreigners, whom fame and curioſity drew to Jeruſalem at that time, the queen of Saba was the moſt diſtinguiſhed. The accounts ſhe had received of the wonderful king of Iſrael, were ſo far above her conception, that ſhe was determined to ſee, whether the reality of his greatneſs bore any proportion with what report had ſpread abroad concerning him. With a noble train of attendants ſhe began her journey from the extremity of the ſouth, and brought him preſents, worthy of her own and Salomon's magnificence, a hundred and twenty talents of gold, vaſt quantities of precious ſtones and perfumes. She entered the royal city, ſhe viewed the palace and the Temple, ſhe ſtood aſtoniſhed at the richneſs and boldneſs of the architecture; but when ſhe came to hear the wiſdom of the king's diſcourſe, and conſidered with what depth of knowledge he reaſoned upon every ſubject, ſhe ſeemed in a manner tranſported out of herſelf. The dignity of divine worſhip, the ſplendor of the court, the number of the king's officers, and the regularity of his family added much to her ſurpriſe: ſhe owned, that her expectations had been far ſurpaſſed, and that public fame, which ſo often magnifies, had here fallen far ſhort of the reality. She ſeemed to envy the happineſs of thoſe, who were employed in the ſervice of ſo great a prince, and were near enough to catch the wiſdom, that dropt from his lips. Being then convinced of what ſhe never could have believed, if ſhe had not ſeen, ſhe took her leave to return into her own country, loaded with royal preſents far more precious, than thoſe ſhe had brought.

The arrival of the queen of Saba from the ſouth, to view the wonders and to hear the wiſdom of king Salomon, is mentioned by our bleſſed Saviour in his Goſpel,

as a warning, leſt ſhe one day riſe to condemn us before the judgment ſeat of Almighty God. She went to hear the wiſdom of a man, ſubject to infirmities and liable to errors like herſelf, and happy did ſhe pronounce them, who were permitted to approach his perſon. Chriſtians have God himſelf for their maſter: it is Jeſus Chriſt, the increated wiſdom of his Father, whom they hear: they have his unerring word for their rule of life, and the kingdom of Heaven for their recompenſe: inexcuſable therefore is their conduct, if in their actions they prefer man to God, the wiſdom of the world to that of Jeſus Chriſt, the enjoyment of the earth to the happineſs of Heaven.

§ V. *Fall of Salomon.* 3 *Kings* 11.

A. M. 3023, *Before J. C.* 977. THE glorious beginnings of Salomon's reign were ſullied by a diſgraceful end. By a fall ſtill more deplorable, than that of his father, he convinces us, that man never can rely with ſecurity upon himſelf, but that the more elevated his ſtation is, the more diffident he ought to be of his own abilities. The heart, which for many years had been the temple of the Holy Ghoſt, began to be moſt ſhamefully polluted by the love of women. Salomon, the once cheriſhed favorite of God and men, fell from one abyſs into another; bereft of his wiſdom, he ſunk from the depth of luſt into the gulph of idolatry. He married no fewer than a thouſand wives, ſeven hundred of whom had the title and rank of queens. Tho' a plurality of wives was at that time permitted by the Law, yet ſuch an exceſs in the number, eſpecially of idolatrous women, was expreſsly forbidden. Salomon had choſen to himſelf wives from Egypt, from the country of Moab and Ammon; and ſo blind and violent was his paſſion for them, that at their requeſt he ordered different temples to be erected to their different idols. Aſtharthe the goddeſs of the Sidonians, Camos the idol of Moab, and Moloch the idol of Ammon, not only had their temples, but

but received worſhip from Salomon himſelf. A conduct ſo unaccountably criminal in a wiſe man, now fifty years of age and upwards, drew upon him God's ſevereſt indignation. Almighty God appeared to him, not as he had done twice before to approve his actions or to grant him favours, but to denounce heavy judgments upon him for his crimes. He told him, that his kingdom ſhould be divided, and the greater part of it given to his ſervant; but that in conſideration of his father David, this diviſion ſhould not take place, till after his death. Jeroboam, the ſon of Nabat, was the ſervant here pointed at, and Salomon knew it by what had paſſed between him and the prophet Ahias. That Prophet having met with Jeroboam in the field, took his cloke and divided it into twelve parts, of which he bade him take ten, as a mark of the diviſion, that God was about to make of the twelve tribes of Iſrael, in puniſhment of the king's infidelity. Jeroboam was a man of good natural abilities, and intruſted with a public employment under Salomon, but having met with ſome contradiction, lifted up his hand againſt the king. After ſuch inſolence he had no clemency to expect from his provoked ſovereign, and being purſued by the miniſters of juſtice, ſaved himſelf by a precipitate flight into Egypt. Salomon reigned forty years over Iſrael with great magnificence: he ſlept with his forefathers in the fifty-ninth year of his age, and was buried in the city of David, leaving the world in doubt, whether his memory be more worthy of praiſe or cenſure, whether he died the friend or enemy of his Creator, the object of his love or hatred. The holy Scripture informs us of his ſin, but makes no mention of his repentance: whether he repented or not, no one can poſitively ſay; ſome think he did, and that in his book of Eccleſiaſtes is expreſſed the ſorrow of his heart for having ſinned, and the vanity he found in all his ſinful purſuits.

Be that, as it will; however fatal to himſelf the fall of Salomon may have been, it cannot fail of being ſerviceable to thoſe, who view it with the eye of faith. It muſt inſpire a contempt of all the world can give; the greateſt affluence of riches, pomp and pleaſures cannot

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ſatisfy an immortal ſoul, nor make her happy. Worldly enjoyments never were poſſeſſed ſo abundantly by any man, as by Salomon; and no man ever was ſo thoroughly acquainted with their vanity and empty promiſes. Vanity of vanities, is the ſentence he has pronounced upon them; all is vanity and affliction of mind, unleſs it be to love God, and ſerve him alone.

§ VI. *Counſellors of Roboam.* 3 *Kings* 12.

A. M. 3029. *Before J. C.* 971. SALOMON to defray the vaſt expenſes, he was at in his buildings and manner of living, had burdened his ſubjects with heavy taxes. Upon his death Roboam, his ſon and ſucceſſor, received an humble petition from the people praying for relief. The young king took three days to conſider of it, during which time he aſſembled his council of ſtate to deliberate what anſwer he ſhould make. The moſt experienced counſellors, who had been employed by the late king, agreed in opinion, that the way for a prince to eſtabliſh his power, and to make himſelf maſter of his ſubjects, was to gain their affections by lenient meaſures in the beginning, and therefore adviſed Roboam to give a favourable anſwer to his people upon the ſubject of their petition. To a prince in the vigour of youth, giddy with his preſent power, and unconcerned about what might be the conſequence, this advice was not welcome. He addreſſed himſelf to the young men, who had been brought up with him, and were ready to flatter him with the advice, that was agreeable to his own notions. Young and unexperienced in the art of governing, he adopted the falſe ſyſtem of his flatterers, and anſwered the deputies of his people in a very imperious language; inſtead of leſſening he harſhly threatened to add ſtill more to their preſent grievances, and inſtead of whips to beat them with ſcorpions. The ſacred hiſtorian obſerves, that this imprudent prince was by the ſecret judgments of God permitted thus to act, and thus to haſten on the execution

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of what Ahias had foretold to Jeroboam. For Roboam's anſwer to the deputies was no ſooner made public, than the people broke out into an open revolt, and vowed never to ſubmit themſelves again to ſo lawleſs a maſter. The prince upon this ſeemed ſenſible of the falſe ſtep he had made, and ſent Aduram, one of his principal officers, to appeaſe the tumult, before it ſhould riſe too high. But the flame of ſedition was now kindled: Jeroboam, who was come back from Egypt, had been active in blowing up the coals; Aduram was no ſooner ſeen, than ſtoned to death, and it was but by flight, that the king eſcaped out of their hands. In this ferment of the people all Iſrael, that is to ſay, ten of the tribes, withdrew from their allegiance to the houſe of David, and choſe Jeroboam for their king. Roboam fancied that he had ſtrength ſufficient to bring them back to their duty, and that by force of arms they might be compelled to acknowledge his authority. With him there remained the tribes of Benjamin and Juda, which laſt was by far the moſt conſiderable. He raiſed an army of a hundred and eighty thouſand men, with an intention to purſue his juſt rights; but an inſpired man, whoſe name was Simeias, unexpectedly came to him, and on the part of God forbade him to proceed againſt Jeroboam and his brethren of Iſrael, becauſe nothing had happened in this revolution of affairs, but as God himſelf had ſaid.

Thus thro' the indiſcretion of a young king, began the long and fatal diviſion of the Iſraelites amongſt themſelves; thus within the narrow limits of a ſingle nation were erected the two diſtinct kingdoms of Juda and Iſrael. In this remarkable epoch of the ſacred hiſtory it appears, that God diſpoſes of the ſtate of nations, as he pleaſes, and that on him depends the fate of kings no leſs than that of other men. The moſt wiſe of men left his crown to an imprudent ſon, and the irregularities of Salomon's advanced age were viſibly puniſhed by the folly of Roboam's youth. The fooliſhneſs of Roboam in preferring the opinion of his young companions to the ſage advice of his old counſellors, bears an exact reſemblance with the misfortune of thoſe, who will liſten only to ſuch adviſers, as

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are either not capable to direct them right, or not honeſt enough to diſſuade them from what is wrong.

§ VII. *The diſobedient Prophet.* 3 *Kings* 13.

A. M. 3030, *Before J. C.* 970. JEROBOAM, ſeeing himſelf maſter of the ten tribes of Iſrael, adopted a ſyſtem of politics, which is but too often followed by ſuch Chriſtians, as make religion ſubſervient to their intereſt. This impious king was perſuaded, that ſhould he let his ſubjects go to perform the public duties of religion in the temple of Jeruſalem, they would by degrees have leſs reſpect for him, and perhaps return to the allegiance of their former ſovereign; he therefore ordered two golden calves to be made, one of which he ſet up in Bethel, and the other in Dan, and divine honours to be paid to them, as to the Gods, who had brought them out of Egypt. To them he erected two ſtately altars, and in the worſhip of his idols he ſtrove to imitate the form, that was obſerved in honour of the true God. He himſelf was the grand performer of his ſuperſtitious ceremonies. As he was one day ſtanding upon the altar at Bethel, and offering incenſe to his idol, a prophet from Juda came, and in the name of God thus cried out againſt the altar: *Altar*, ſaid he, a child of the houſe of David, by name Joſias, ſhall be born, and he ſhall immolate upon thee the prieſts of the high places, who now burn incenſe upon thee, and he ſhall burn men's bones upon thee: and as a teſtimony of the truth I uttery the altar ſhall forthwith be rent, and the aſhes, that are upon it, ſhall be poured out. The altar that inſtant ſplit aſunder, and Joſias king of Juda literally fulfilled the prophecy three hundred and fifty years afterwards. Jeroboam inſtead of profiting by this miraculous admonition grew furious, and called upon his guards to take the prophet into cuſtody. In the violence of his rage he ſtretched forth his hand againſt the man of God, and it withered, nor was he able to draw it back again. Diſarmed at the ſtroke, he

he changed his threats into prayers, and became an humble ſupplicant for his cure. By the prophet's prayer the king recovered the free uſe of his hand as miraculouſly, as he had loſt it. He acknowledged the favour, and invited his benefactor home to dine with him, which the prophet poſitively declined, upon the account, that God had expreſsly forbid him either to eat or drink in that place. The man of God departed homeward, and was ſoon after overtaken by an old prophet, who dwelt in Bethel. This old prophet having been informed by his ſons of what the man of God had done that day in Bethel, immediately reſolved to bring him to his houſe: he therefore went after him, and found him ſitting under a tree: he courteouſly ſaluted and invited him to dine: the prophet of Juda replied, that the Lord had forbidden him to eat or drink the leaſt thing in that place; upon which the man of Bethel ſaid, I alſo am a prophet, and have been admoniſhed by an Angel of the Lord to follow and to bring thee back to Bethel, that we may there eat and drink together. The prophet of Juda let himſelf be perſuaded: he returned with the other to Bethel, and as they were ſitting together at table, the man of Bethel was inſpired to reprimand him for his diſobedience, and to tell him, ſince he had returned and eat contrary to the command of God, that his bones ſhould not be buried in the ſepulchre of his forefathers. The prophet of Juda roſe up, and departed: he had not gone far, before a lion met and killed him in the way. The old man being told of the accident, went and found the lion ſtanding over the dead body, which he immediately took up, and carried back to Bethel, where he buried it, and ordered his own bones after death to be buried in the ſame grave. Thus the prophecy was both ſpoken and fulfilled the ſame day.

As one ſin is oftentimes the puniſhment of another, Saint Gregory thinks, that the diſobedience, into which the prophet of Juda fell, may have been the conſequence of ſome ſecret vanity, he had felt in ſeeing himſelf privileged with the gift of miracles. Nothing is ſo apt to blind

blind the underſtanding, as a vain conceit of one's ſelf, and that perchance may have miſled the prophet firſt to interpret, and then to break the order he had received. Being deceived by the invitation of a prophet of Bethel, he came to an untimely end; by a violent but paſſing death, he paid the puniſhment due to his diſobedience, that his ſoul by ſuffering might be cleanſed from guilt, and be prepared for a life of endleſs happineſs.

§ VIII. *Death of Zambri.* 3 *Kings* 16.

A. M. 3075, *Before J. C.* 925. JEROBOAM enjoyed little peace in his new-acquired kingdom, which was not to be maintained but by hard ſtruggle and perpetual bloodſhed. After a troubleſome reign of two and twenty years, he finiſhed a wicked life by an unhappy death. His name is never mentioned in the holy Scripture but with deteſtation, on account of his having ſet up the worſhip of idols, which was followed by all the kings his ſucceſſors in the throne of Iſrael, till an end was put to that kingdom by the Aſſyrians. Nadab, a prince equally wicked, ſucceeded his father, and reigned two years, when he was deprived both of his crown and life by Baaſa. Baaſa purſued the ſame violent method to ſecure the crown, that he had employed to get it: he cut off every branch of Jeroboam's ſtock, and by that bloody ſtroke executed the very ſentence, which the inſpired Ahias had ſome years before pronounced againſt Jeroboam, in puniſhment of his idolatry. Having thus fixed his family, as he thought, in the throne of Iſrael, he declared war againſt Aſa, king of Juda. Aſa had lately ſucceeded his wicked father Abias, who reigned but three years after the death of his father Roboam. The piety and zeal for religion, which diſtinguiſhed Aſa's reign, drew down the bleſſing of God upon his arms, and was the ſource of many glorious victories, which the armies of Juda gained againſt their enemies: for he had almoſt continual war with Iſrael, and the Iſraelites were not able to ſtand againſt him

him in the field. Baaſa after a cruel and turbulent reign of twenty-four years died, and left the crown to his ſon Ela. This prince began his reign by the murder of Jehu a holy prophet, who had denounced the ſame heavy judgments againſt Baaſa's family, as Baaſa himſelf had inflicted upon the family of Jeroboam. Ela reigned no more than two years: for Zambri, who was captain of half the cavalry, formed a conſpiracy and murdered him, as he was ſitting at table in the governor's houſe of Therſa, and declared himſelf king upon the ſpot. Zambri's treaſon was no ſooner known in the camp, than Amri, who commanded the army, was choſen king by univerſal conſent. Amri refuſed not the ſceptre, which the unexpected favour of the people put into his hands. Being naturally brave, he marched directly againſt his antagoniſt, who had ſhut himſelf up in the city of Therſa. Zambri finding himſelf cloſely beſieged by a reſolute and active enemy, and ſeeing the city in danger of being taken, ſhut himſelf up in the royal palace, which he ſet fire to, and periſhed in the flames ſeven days after he had traiterouſly imbrued his hands in the blood of his lawful ſovereign.

Zambri died in his ſins, ſays the holy Scripture, and by the tragical end, he made, has ſhown the world, how odious a tyrant is both to God and men. The man, who might have been happy, had he been content to move within the bounds in which his fortune firſt placed him, became unhappy the very moment, that the deſire of lawleſs power carried him beyond his ſphere. The title and the crown, which he had acquired by the murder of his royal maſter, could not give him peace of mind: tortured with remorſe, and hurried away by deſpair, he condemned himſelf to the flames, and thus became the ſelf-executioner of a criminal, equally impious againſt God, as he had been cruel to his prince.

§ IX.

§ IX. *Elias fed by Ravens.* 3 *Kings* 17.

A. M. 3092, *Before J. C.* 908. AMRI, being peaceably poſſeſſed of the kingdom of Iſrael, bought the mountain of Somer, on which he built a city for his royal reſidence, and called it Samaria. After a wicked reign of twelve years, he had his ſon Achab for ſucceſſor in the throne. This prince having married Jezabel, a daughter of the king of Sidon, brought in the worſhip of Baal, the Sidonian idol, and became the very worſt of his predeceſſors in the kingdom of Iſrael. It was in this king's days that the great Elias appeared, and began to exert the power he had received of working the moſt ſtupendous miracles in ſupport of the true religion. To puniſh the tribes of Iſrael for their crimes, which were at that time ſwelled to an enormous height, and to make them mindful of the God, whom they had abandoned, the prophet by his prayers ſhut up the heavens from giving any rain for three years. This long drought cauſed a dreadful famine over all the land: while others felt the puniſhment due to their ſins, the prophet was miraculouſly ſupported by the divine hand, which fills every creature with benediction. His place of reſidence was at firſt near the torrent Carith, where the ravens brought him bread and meat every morning and evening, and he drank of the pure ſtream. The ſpring being at laſt dried up, he was directed by Almighty God to go to Sarephta, a town of the Sidonians, where a widow woman would provide him with what was neceſſary. As he came near the town, he found a poor woman picking up a few ſticks: he aſked her for ſomething to drink; ſhe went to fetch him a draught of water, and as ſhe was going on towards her own houſe, he called after her to bring him alſo ſomething to eat. She anſwered him, that a handful of meal and a little oil was all ſhe had for the ſupport of herſelf and ſon; that ſhe was going to dreſs it for them both, that they might eat and die.

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The holy man comforted the woman in her diſtreſs, bade her go and firſt make him a little cake of the meal and oil ſhe had, and after that make for herſelf and ſon; for that neither the one nor the other ſhould fail, as long as the drought continued. The widow went and did as the prophet told her. Both he and ſhe and her family eat, and from that day the pot of meal did not waſte, nor was the oil diminiſhed. She was happy, tho' of an idolatrous country, to entertain a prophet of the living God under her roof, and by rendering him a ſervice, which was refuſed him in the land of Iſrael, ſhe prefigured the future faith of the Gentiles, ſucceeding the incredulity of the Jews. But the death of her only ſon happening ſoon after, changed her joy into ſorrow. The prophet was moved at her misfortune, and having a faith in God equal to his compaſſion for the diſtreſt mother, undertook to raiſe the child to life again. He took the breathleſs corpſe out of the widow's arms, carried it to his room, laid it upon his bed, and ſtretched and meaſured himſelf upon the child three times, and cried to the Lord and ſaid, O Lord my God, let the ſoul of this child, I beſeech thee, return into his body. The Lord heard the voice of Elias; the child revived; Elias took him down to his mother, and ſaid, Behold thy ſon liveth!

In this inſtance, Elias is a bright example of that benevolent charity, which all good men owe and pay to one another. To condole with our ſuffering brethren, to grieve with the afflicted, to comfort the diſtreſt, to ſtoop to their relief, to become little with the little, and weak with the weak, as far as can be done without yielding to ſin, is the exerciſe of that Chriſtian charity, which teaches us to love our neighbour as ourſelves. To become all to all, that he might gain all to Chriſt, was the practice of Saint Paul, and ſtill is the ſtudy of thoſe holy men, who according to their ſtation in life are zealous to promote the ſervice and glory of their Creator.

§ X. *Sacrifice of Elias.* 3 *Kings* 18.

A. M. 3096, *Before J. C.* 904. WHILE the prophet Elias lay safe in his retreat under the widow's roof at Sarephta, Achab and Jezabel made diligent search after him with a design of putting him to death, as the cause of the heavy disasters, that distressed the nation; but not being able to discover where he was, they wreaked their vengeance upon the priests of the Lord, and a dreadful persecution was commenced against them. Achab at that time had for the intendant of his palace a man of extraordinary virtue, called Abdias, who to screen as many as he could from the fury of their persecutors, had concealed no fewer than a hundred prophets in caves, where he privately supplied them with all the necessaries of life. This holy man, as he was ranging the country, to see if he could find any grass for his horses and mules, met Elias, who by divine inspiration had left his retreat. The prophet bade him go and tell his master, that Elias was there. Abdias was afraid of undertaking the commission, being in doubt, whether the prophet might not fly off in the mean time, and thereby expose him to the king's indignation. Elias assured him by the Lord of hosts, that his resolution was to see the king that day. Abdias therefore informed Achab of it, and Achab came to meet Elias. As soon as he saw him, he with a stern severity exclaimed, Art thou he, who troublest Israel? To whom Elias, with a spirit of zeal and fortitude not to be daunted by threats, nor silenced by contempt, answered, It is not I, who trouble Israel; it is you, O prince; it is the house of your father, who have left the true God, and sacrificed to Baal. Nevertheless, call together the people of Israel, continued he, send for the prophets of Baal, and let them meet me upon mount Carmel. Achab, in compliance with his request, sent to the children of Israel, and gathered together the prophets upon the mountain. Elias came according to agreement, and addressed himself to the Israelites in the following manner:

ner: How long will you be divided in your choice, O men of Iſrael? How long will you hang in ſuſpence between the two? If the Lord be God, acknowledge him; but if Baal, then follow him. Of the prophets of the Lord, I am here the only one; and behold of the prophets of Baal there are four hundred and fifty. Let two bullocks be given us: let them take one, and me the other: let them dreſs theirs, and lay it upon the altar: I will do the ſame with mine; but let no fire be put under either. We will, each in our turn, call upon the God, whom we reſpectively adore, and He, who ſhall anſwer by ſending down fire from Heaven to conſume the holocauſt, ſhall be acknowledged for the true and only God. The people with one accord approved of the propoſal. The prophets of Baal began in the firſt place to prepare their victim; they laid it upon the altar, and called upon Baal from morning till mid-day, but received no anſwer. You call not loud enough, ſaid Elias to them; Baal does not hear you; ſtrain your voices higher, your God is perhaps aſleep, or on a journey, or talking, or at an inn. Piqued at the prophet's raillery, they exerted themſelves anew, they bawled aloud, they leaped over the altar, they laſhed themſelves with knives and lancets, but could get no anſwer from Baal. The hour of mid-day was elapſed; Elias called the people to him, and bade them repair the old ſtone altar of the Lord, which had been once there, but was then broken down: he drew a gutter round it, piled up the wood in order, and laid his diſjointed victim on the top. This done, he ordered water to be brought, and poured upon the pile, till it was thoroughly ſoaked, and the gutter filled with the running ſtream. The hour appointed for the ſacrifice being come, the prophet in a ſolemn prayer addreſſed himſelf to the God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, that he would manifeſt his glory to the children of Iſrael, and convince them, that he was the Lord their God. He had no ſooner ſpoke, than the fire of the Lord fell, and conſumed not only the holocauſt, but the whole pile and very ſtones of the altar. The evidence of the miracle anſwering exactly to the prophet's propoſal, left no

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room for any doubt or reply; the people fell flat upon the ground, and confeſſed, that the Lord was the only God. Then ſeize upon the prophets of Baal, cried out Elias, and let not one eſcape: his order was obeyed, and the impoſtors ſuffered immediate death, as their crimes deſerved. The prophet then prayed to God a ſecond time, that he would open the Heavens, and let his ſhowers fall again upon the earth. The clouds, as he prayed, began to gather, and ſcarce had the people time to reach the town of Jezrahel, before a copious fall of rain enſued.

This ſtory of Elias, ſay the holy Fathers, diſplays the force of truth in the ſtrongeſt colours, and marks out the influence, it has upon the minds of men. Borne up by that confidence, which his conſcience gave him, Elias ſtood firm in his duty to God, tho' alone and ſurrounded by a whole nation of his enemies. In his perſon we ſee verified the ſaying of Saint Jerom, That truth for its ſupport wants but few defenders; no number of opponents can either hurt or ſhake it.

§ XI. *Flight of Elias.* 3 *Kings* 19.

A. M. 3097. *Before J. C.* 903. THE wicked Jezabel, being told by Achab, how her prophets had been put to death, ſent to let Elias know, that before the end of four and twenty hours, he ſhould experience the ſame fate. The holy prophet trembled at the threat, and fled out of the territories of Iſrael to Berſabee of Juda. There he diſmiſſed his ſervant, and went forward one day's journey into the deſert. By this ſudden viciſſitude of courage and timidity in ſo great a prophet we ſee, ſays Saint Gregory, how inconſtant man is of himſelf amidſt the various incidents of life, and how ſoon after the moſt heroic actions he falls back, if not ſtrengthened from above, into his natural ſtate of deſpondency and weakneſs. Elias having eſcaped into the lonely deſert, ſpent with fatigue, and oppreſſed with anguiſh of mind, ſat himſelf down under a juniper-

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tree, and begged of Almighty God to take him out of life. He laid himself down to sleep upon the ground, and an Angel of the Lord appeared and woke him, saying, Arise and eat. He opened his eyes, and saw a loaf and a pitcher of water placed near his head: he eat and drank, and composed himself to sleep again. The Angel came a second time, and bade him eat again, because he had a great way to go. The prophet rose up, and being strengthened with that miraculous bread, which by the commentators of holy writ is considered as an emblem of the blessed Eucharist, which nourishes our souls with spiritual life during our pilgrimage on earth, he continued his journey for forty days and forty nights together, till he came to the mountain of Horeb, where he concealed himself in a cave. There he received an order from Almighty God to repair back thro' the desert to Damascus, where he should anoint Hazael king of Syria; he was also ordered to anoint Jehu to be king of Israel, and Eliseus to be prophet. In obedience to this order, Elias left the mountain of Horeb, and in his way towards Damascus found Eliseus ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen in a field. He spread his mantle over him, as he had been commanded, and made him a prophet. Eliseus feeling himself changed, as it were, into another man, left the oxen and ran after Elias, saying, Let me only go, and take my last farewell of my father and mother at home, and I will follow thee. Elias said, Go and return back, for that which was my part, I have done to thee. Eliseus returned, took a yoke of the oxen he was ploughing with, invited the people to partake with him in the feast, then rose up and professed himself the follower and inseparable disciple of Elias.

Eliseus, says Saint Ambrose, left his father to follow Elias, from whom he experienced every kindness and every benefit of a father's love. Being the studious imitator of his master's virtues, he became his heir and successor in the gift of prophecy and miracles. Thus in the old testament, as well as in the new, we have the brightest patterns of perfection formed in the school of those excellent masters, who by the lustre of their virtues

have drawn others to copy their example. In the law of grace we have this advantage above those of the ancient testament, that we see the path of virtue traced out to us not only by the men of God, but also by a God-man, Jesus Christ in the actions he performed, as Saint Austin remarks, so tempered the actions of his divine and human nature together, as to place the imitation of his virtues within the reach of our weak capacities. We profess ourselves his followers and the imitators of his virtues: and great at the last day must be our confusion before the whole world, if we shall appear to have acted in contradiction with ourselves, and be found destitute of those ornaments of humility, self-denial, and patience, which are essential to the character of a Christian.

§ XII. *Piety of king Josaphat. 2 Chron.* 17.

A. M. 3105, *Before J. C.* 895. WHILST the wicked Achab reigned in the kingdom of Israel, and Jezabel his wife concurred with him in every excess of impiety, the crown of Juda had passed from Asa to his son Josaphat. Asa in his general conduct had been a religious prince, and distinguished himself by many heroic actions. He banished the worship of idols, built cities, and restored good order amongst his subjects. During his reign, Zara the Ethiopian invaded the territories of Judea with a million of men: Asa collected his troops, and trusting in the hand of God more than in the force of his arms, drove the invaders back with great confusion and total overthrow of their vast army. But being afterwards attacked by Baasa, king of Israel, he did not show the like fortitude. Unmindful of the power, which had rescued him from the arms of the Ethiopians and Lybians, he made an alliance with the king of Syria. Almighty God was displeased with his conduct, and sent the prophet Hanani to tell him, that since he had placed his confidence in the king of Syria, and not in the Lord his God, wars from that day should arise against him. The truth was disagreeable to

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a man, who had acted contrary to it. Asa, notwithstanding his piety, ordered the prophet to be imprisoned, and many of his subjects, who had displeased him, to be put to death. The Scripture moreover blames him, when he was sick, for relying more upon the skill of his physicians, than upon the help of God's hand. Thus, after having merited for many years the character of a just and pious prince, he finished his reign by a mixture of actions, that were either injurious to God, or cruel to his subjects. After a reign of one and forty years, he was succeeded by his son Josaphat, a prince not less distinguished for his religious, than for his kingly virtues. He pursued the path, that David had traced out to him. His great zeal for religion endeared him to Almighty God, and was the source of boundless blessings, that flowed in both upon himself and his people. Not satisfied with the bare orders, that his father had given for no more sacrifices to be made to Baal, he struck at the very root of the evil, and demolished the groves and places of superstitious worship, that had been made upon the tops of mountains. And as ignorance is commonly the cause of abuse in religious matters, he dispersed thro' the towns of his dominions virtuous Priests and Levites, who should explain the Law to his subjects, and teach the observance of it. With this attention to the duties of religion, Josaphat joined an unwearied application to promote the welfare of his people, and to provide for the security of his kingdom against the attacks of foreign powers. In the art of governing he surpassed all his predecessors, and by that means made himself not only respected, but feared by the neighbouring princes. Constant success attended his arms, whenever he was compelled to turn them against the enemies of his country. In the person of this prince God seems to show, that he takes a pleasure in heaping honours and glory upon them, who are faithful in their duty of honour and respect to him. For God honours those, who honour him, and covers them with contempt, who contemn him.

§. XIII. *Death of Achab.* 3 *Kings* 21, 22.

A. M. 3107. *Before J. C.* 893. THE sins of Achab and Jezabel were now rising to their full height: the murder of the innocent Naboth completed their just measure. This inoffensive man of the town of Jezrahel was possessed of a vineyard, which he had inherited from his ancestors, but which unfortunately for him lay adjoining to the king's palace. Achab was desirous of converting it into a garden, and offered either to purchase or exchange it for something better. But Naboth was particularly fond of a spot which he had inherited from his forefathers, and would by no means consent to part with it. Naboth's refusal gave the king great uneasiness, insomuch that in a fit of fretful indignation he threw himself upon his bed, and refused to eat. Jezabel observing the violent agitation of his mind, desired to know the cause, and upon his telling her what it was, scornfully replied, Well doest thou reign, and great is thy sway in the kingdom of Israel, if thy power extends not to Naboth's vineyard: I will procure it for thee. She therefore wrote a letter in the name of Achab, sealed it with his signet, and sent it to the ancients, and chief men of Jezrahel, with orders, that they should suborn two false witnesses to prove, that Naboth had spoken blasphemy against God, and treason against the king. The order was no sooner received than executed. Naboth was called upon to clear himself of a crime, which he had never thought of: it was in vain to plead, the witnesses were prepared to swear, as they had been directed: Naboth was declared guilty, condemned and stoned the same day. Jezabel in triumph ran to acquaint the king, that he might go and take peaceable possession of Naboth's vineyard, for that Naboth was dead. Achab immediately hastened to the spot: Elias, by the command of God met, and accosted him in these words: Thou hast slain Naboth, thou hast possessed thyself of his vineyard, but in the very place, where the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth,

lioth, they ſhall lick thy blood alſo; thy race, like that of Jeroboam and Baaſa, ſhall be rooted out, and Jezabel ſhall be devoured by dogs in the field of Jezrahel. Achab engaged ſoon after in a war againſt the Syrians, and thereby haſtened his deſtruction. Joſaphat, who had married his ſon to Athalia, one of Achab's daughters, accompanied him to battle. This religious prince being unwilling to engage in an enterprize of that importance without conſulting God, Achab ordered four hundred of his prophets to attend, who unanimouſly agreed in the anſwer, that they knew would flatter their maſter. But this did not ſatisfy the king of Juda; he deſired to know, if no prophet of the Lord was to be found. Achab anſwered there was one: but one, whom he could not hear, becauſe he never promiſed him any thing, that was good. Joſaphat begged he might ſee and hear what he had to ſay. The prophet was then ſent for: it was the good Micheas, who being uninſtructed in the art of evil flattery, contradicted every thing, that the falſe prophets had ſaid, and foretold, that the unſucceſsful war ſhould end in Achab's death. Achab ordered him to be carried off immediately to priſon, to be there fed with the bread of affliction and water of diſtreſs, till his return in peace. If thou return in peace, replied the prophet, the Lord hath not ſpoken by me. The king was ſtruck at the prophet's words, and in conſequence put off the enſigns of royalty, not to expoſe himſelf in the field more than neceſſary: for he knew the king of Syria's reſentment was levelled principally againſt him; and in effect orders were given to the Syrian troops to direct their chief attacks againſt the king of Iſrael's perſon. The two armies advanced to give each other battle. The princely equipage, which diſtinguiſhed Joſaphat alone above the reſt, drew the whole weight of the battle that way, and he actually had fallen by the ſword of the Syrians, if he had not declared aloud, who he was. To ſuch extremity of danger was a well-meaning prince expoſed, in conſequence of the alliance, which he had made with a wicked one. By a random ſhot from a Syrian bow, Achab was mortally wounded in his chariot;

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a ſtream of blood guſhed from the wound; he ordered his charioteer to drive him out of the field of battle, and he died at night. His chariot was drawn to the pool of Samaria, where it was waſhed, and the dogs licked up his blood, as the Lord had ſpoken. So inevitable is the ſtroke, that God has once decreed againſt the crimes of men! The moſt potent monarchs, when their time is come, are as little able to reſiſt, as the leaſt of their ſubjects: in the hour of their proſperity they may thunder at others, ſays Saint Auſtin, but the God of Heaven, when he pleaſes, hurls down the vengeance, which is due to their impiety; and then it is, that they, who according to the words of holy Scripture appeared like gods upon the earth, are no more than duſt and aſhes before the Lord.

§ XIV. *Elias taken up to Heaven.* 4 *Kings* 2.

A. M. 3108. *Before J. C.* 892. AChab, being ſlain in the manner we have related, was ſucceeded in the throne by his ſon Ochozias. This prince, who inherited both his parents vices, and trod in their footſteps, loſt his life in the ſecond year of his reign by an accidental fall from a window. Being in great danger from the bruiſe he received, he ſent to conſult Beelzebub, the god of Accaron, whether he were to live or die. It was an inſult the moſt abominable to the God of Iſrael, that a king of the Jewiſh nation ſhould have recourſe in his diſtreſs to the prince of darkneſs. Elias on the part of God met the king's meſſengers, and told them, that Ochozias ſhould not riſe from the bed, on which he lay; and that ſince he had ſent to conſult Beelzebub, as if there were no God in Iſrael, he ſhould moſt certainly die. The meſſengers returned, and gave an account to the king of the man, they had ſeen, and of the things, he had ſaid. By the deſcription of his dreſs and perſon Ochozias knew it to be Elias, and inſtantly ordered a captain with a company of fifty men to go and apprehend him. The captain went up to him,

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as he was ſitting upon the top of a hill, and imperiouſly commanded him to come down to the king. Elias anſwered, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from Heaven and conſume thee with thy men: and it did ſo. The king ſent another company, compoſed of an equal number of men, to the holy prophet. The captain delivered his orders with the ſame diſreſpect, as the former, and periſhed by the ſame fate. The captain of a third company, being ſent upon the ſame errand, proceeded more cautiouſly: he preſumed not to approach ſo near to the man of God, but ſtood at an awful diſtance, and in the moſt reſpectful terms begged, that he would condeſcend to return with him to the king. The holy prophet complied with the officer's requeſt, and being admitted into the king's preſence, repeated to him the fatal ſentence of death, which happened ſoon after. This is the laſt public action, that is related of Elias. The time appointed for his tranſlation from earth to heaven was at hand; his diſciple Eliſeus had a knowledge of it, and was determined not to let him out of his ſight. Elias tried three different times to retire from him, as if he wanted to be alone, and Eliſeus each time declared, that he would not leave him. They came to the banks of the Jordan; Elias ſmote the waters with his cloke, and the divided ſtream opened them a dry paſſage to the other ſide. Being gone over, Elias bade his diſciple aſk ſome favour of him, before they parted. Eliſeus aſked him for his two-fold ſpirit of prophecy and miracles. That is a thing not eaſily to be granted, replied Elias; nevertheleſs, if you ſee me, as I aſcend towards the heavens, you ſhall obtain it. They went on walking and diſcourſing together, when behold! a fiery chariot and fiery horſes on a ſudden parted them aſunder; Elias ſlipt into the chariot, and was carried up in a whirlwind towards heaven, and Eliſeus ſaw him. As he mounted, he let fall his mantle, as his laſt and only legacy to his dear diſciple, who ſtood looking and calling after him. Eliſeus took up the mantle of Elias with reſpect, and received it, ſays Saint Chryſoſtom, as a precious armour, that was to cover him, as it had covered his maſter,

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against the attacks of his powerful adversaries. Vested with a coarse and homely cloke, he bore the badge of that Christian poverty of spirit, which is a sure fence to those, who possess it, against the alluring temptations of a wicked world. This humble poverty of spirit is the source, from whence the true disciples of Jesus Christ draw the greatest spiritual blessings; with this they live content, and envy not the rich their pomps and shining vanities.

§ XV. *First miracles of Eliseus. 4 Kings 2.*

A. M. 3108, *Before J. C.* 892. ELISEUS began immediately after the miraculous translation of Elias to give convincing proofs, that he was fully possessed of the gift he had asked for. The first exertion of his power was upon the waters of the Jordan. He had seen his master divide the stream, as they came along, and in his return expected to do the same. He struck the waters with the mantle of Elias, which he had in his hand, but the waters did not divide. His faith was not dejected; he struck the rivers a second time, and with an animated confidence exclaimed, Where is now the God of Elias! The waters, as tho' they had been sensible of the prophet's power, instantly divided hither and thither, and the prophet passed over on dry ground between them. Some of the inhabitants of Jericho, who stood over against him, saw the wonder he had wrought, and being thereby convinced, that the spirit of Elias was given to Eliseus, they advanced to meet him, and received him with a religious respect. He remained some days in the city, during which time the citizens represented to him that, notwithstanding their delightful situation, the waters of Jericho were very bad and their soil barren, and therefore begged, that he would make use of his miraculous power in their favour. The prophet listened to their request: he bade them bring him a new vessel with some salt; which being brought, he went out and cast the salt into the spring, which supplied

ed the town with water, assuring them, that God would henceforward heal both the unwholesomeness of the waters, and the barrenness of the soil. The effect followed the prophet's promise. The efficacy of his word, says Saint Ambrose, acted not only upon the superficial stream, that flowed along the ground, it also penetrated into the hidden channels, healed the very source, and communicated the blessing of life to future generations. For by rendering the waters wholesome, Eliseus preserved the lives of thousands, who became the fathers of a posterity, which would otherwise have never sprung to light. This, according to the same holy Father, was a figure of that wonderful change, which Jesus Christ has since effected in the morals and belief of men throughout the world. Into the midst of nations, tainted with the corruption of sin, he has sent his apostles, whom he calls the salt of the earth, to heal them of their past sterility, and to make them fertile in good works. This miracle of Eliseus, which was so salutary to the town of Jericho, was followed by another, which shows him to have been animated with the very spirit of Elias. In his way to Bethel, one of the seats of Jeroboam's calf-worship, he met with some boys of the town, who perceiving him to be bald, began to insult and impudently miscall him. Eliseus looked back, and denounced the wrath of God upon them. He had scarce spoken the words, when, behold! two bears came out of the neighbouring forest, and destroyed two and forty of the wicked boys.

We may with reason say on this occasion, what Saint Austin said on another, that the wrath of Eliseus was a prophetic wrath, which even then marked out the misfortune of those untoward children of the Church, who wickedly laugh and mock at the cross of Christ. There are many such, says the holy Doctor; and tho' we see not the bears tearing their bodies into pieces, yet we know, that more deplorable is the secret havock made in their souls by merciless devils, to whom they make themselves a prey, on account of the mockery and insults, that they offer to Jesus Christ, by their loose maxims and immoral lives.

§ XVI. *Other miracles of Eliſeus.* 4 *Kings* 4.

A. M. 3109, *Before J. C.* 891. OCHOZIAS, the king of Iſrael, was ſucceeded by Joram, his ſecond brother, a wicked prince, tho' in a leſs degree than his parents, Achab and Jezabel. For although he took down the ſtatues of Baal, which his father had ſet up, yet he ſtill retained Jeroboam's worſhip of the golden calves. Having declared war againſt the Moabites for refuſing him the annual tribute, which they had paid to his predeceſſors, he intreated the king of Juda to aid him with his troops. Joſaphat, on account of the friendſhip, that ſubſiſted between them, headed an army to his aſſiſtance, and the king of Edom joined them in the expedition. They directed their route round the dead ſea, thro' the dry and barren deſert of Idumea; no enemy appeared, they marched on for ſeven days without any oppoſition, when the army began to ſuffer for want of water. It was a diſtreſſing ſituation; the king of Iſrael dreaded the worſt of conſequences, and fancied nothing could prevent their falling into the hands of Moab. Joſaphat inquired if no prophet of the Lord was there to pray for them, and was told of Eliſeus, who poured water upon the hands of Elias. The word of the Lord is with him, ſaid Joſaphat: the three kings went immediately to him, and Joram was the firſt to requeſt his mediation in their favour. The requeſt of a prince, whoſe ſuperſtition led him on every other occaſion to conſult the prophets of Jeroboam, was not likely to obtain any extraordinary bleſſing from the God of Abraham. Go to the prophets of thy father and mother, ſaid Eliſeus to him; what have I to do with thee? Were it not for the reſpect, I have for Joſaphat, the king of Juda, I ſhould not have regarded thee, nor hearkened to thy requeſt: but bring me hither a muſician. A muſician came, and as he began to play, the prophet grew inſpired. Make the channel full of ditches, ſaid he, for it ſhall be filled with water, that you may drink: the Lord will moreover deli-

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ver Moab into your hands. Next morning a copious ſtream without wind or rain poured itſelf along the deſert, and the country flowed with water. The Moabites being informed, that three kings were upon their march thro' the deſert to invade them, had haſtily drawn their troops together, and ſtood upon the borders of their country ready to receive them. The riſing ſun ſpread its bluſhing rays upon the ſurface of the new ſtream, which the Moabites perceiving and fancying to be blood, concluded that the kings had diſagreed amongſt themſelves, and turned their ſwords againſt one another. Full of that notion they confuſedly hurried on to collect the ſpoils of a victory, as they thought, already gained to their hand. They advanced to the very camp of Iſrael. The Iſraelites received them ſword in hand, unexpectedly attacked, and defeated their whole army. Elated with their good fortune, they vigorouſly purſued their victory, ſtormed the enemies cities, and laid waſte the country.

Eliſeus did not confine his miraculous powers to thoſe circumſtances only, where kings and armies were to be ſaved from ruin; he made the poor the objects of his charity, and interfered for the relief of private families. A poor widow, being oppreſſed with debt, and threatened by her creditor with the ſeizure of her two children, applied for relief to the holy prophet. The prophet aſked her, what ſhe had left, and ſhe anſwering nothing but a little oil, he bade her borrow all the empty veſſels, ſhe could find amongſt her neighbours, and to fill them with her oil, which ſhould never ceaſe to run, as long as ſhe had an empty veſſel to receive it. The effect anſwered her wiſhes; the oil was multiplied ſufficiently to ſatisfy her creditor, and ſtill enough remained for her own and children's uſe.

This miracle, ſays Saint Gregory, marked the plentifulneſs of divine grace, which the Holy Ghoſt has ſince diffuſed upon the Church of Chriſt. It is our duty, ſays Saint Bernard, to pray daily for a ſhare of this holy oil; but if we would chuſe to receive any conſiderable portion of it, we ſhould be careful to keep our hearts void of all

ſenſual and terrene affections: for the unction of the divine Spirit repleniſhes thoſe veſſels only, which it finds empty. Vain is the thought, and idle is the attempt to unite God and the world, the ſpirit and the fleſh together; they both war againſt one another. No one can at the ſame time run after the pleaſures of the earth, and taſte of the ſweets of heaven.

§ XVII. *Naaman healed of his leproſy.* 4 *Kings* 5.

A. M. 3110, *Before J. C.* 890. ELISEUS, in the different excurſions that he made through the country, often paſſed by the town of Sunam, where a virtuous woman had by her huſband's conſent furniſhed a little room for his uſe, and gave him a friendly welcome, as often as he came. In return for theſe charitable ſervices, the prophet bade his ſervant aſk her, if he could procure her any favour from the king? ſhe anſwered, none. What then can I do for her, replied the man of God? Do not aſk, ſaid Giezi, for ſhe hath no ſon. She ſhall have a ſon, anſwered Eliſeus, and ſhall conceive this very day. The event verified the prediction. The mother was happy in her ſon, till his untimely death made her more diſconſolate, than if ſhe had never known, what it was to be a mother. She laid the breathleſs body upon Eliſeus's bed, and haſtened to mount Carmel, his uſual place of reſidence, to relate her misfortune, and open the anguiſh of her mind to the holy man. Eliſeus ſympathized with her in her ſorrows, comforted her with hopes, and directed his man Giezi to go with his ſtaff, and raiſe the child to life. Giezi had not the faith of his maſter, nor the virtues requiſite for ſo great a work. He laid the prophet's ſtaff, as he had been directed, upon the child's face, but the child did not riſe. The prophet therefore went in perſon to the woman's houſe; he ſtretched himſelf, in imitation of Elias, at full length upon the body of the child, he prayed, he recalled life into him that was dead, and reſtored him to his mother. The power of working great

great miracles accompanied Eliſeus whereever he went, and acquired him a great name, not only amongſt the Jews, but likewiſe amongſt foreign nations. Naaman, a great favorite of the king of Syria, and the general of his armies, was infected with an inveterate leproſy: various preſcriptions for his cure had been tried, to no purpoſe. Fortunately for him, he had in his family a Jewiſh girl, who often ſignified to his wife her miſtreſs, that ſhe was ſure the general would recover his health, if he would only go to the wonderful prophet in the land of Iſrael. Naaman followed the advice, and obtained letters from his royal maſter to Joram the king of Iſrael. Joram received the letters, and finding in them, that the king of Syria requeſted the cure of his ſervant Naaman, he began to rend his garments, and to aſk, whom the Syrian took him for; whether for a God, who had the power of healing leproſies? Eliſeus had intelligence of the matter, and privately deſired Joram to ſend the general to him, that he might know, there was a prophet in Iſrael. Naaman therefore, with a train of attendants, came to the prophet's gate. The prophet, without ſo much as going out to ſee or ſalute him, ſent his ſervant to tell him, that to be healed he muſt go and waſh himſelf ſeven times in the river Jordan. Naaman, who had expected to ſee the prophet come and invoke the name of the Lord his God, and heal him by touching the affected part, was offended at the meſſage, and in a rage turned his chariot to return into Syria; upon which his attendants began to remonſtrate, that ſince the prophet had promiſed him his cure, upon ſo eaſy a condition, as was that of waſhing himſelf in the Jordan, he ought certainly to comply. The general could not diſapprove of ſo reaſonable a remonſtrance: he went to the Jordan, waſhed himſelf ſeven times in the ſtream, and his fleſh became as clean, as that of a little child. Cleanſed from his leproſy, he returned with all his train to Eliſeus, and made him an offer of the rich preſents, which he had brought, but which the prophet would not receive. Giezi was a ſtranger to ſuch generous principles. That ſelf-intereſted ſervant followed Naaman, as he went away,

and

and by a lie, unknown, as he imagined, to his maſter, obtained from him the value of two talents of ſilver. Eliſeus, who had the gift of knowing abſent things, as tho' they had paſſed before his eyes, called his ſervant to a ſevere account for what he had done, and told him, that ſince he had ſhared of Naaman's money, he ſhould alſo ſhare of his diſorder. Giezi was that inſtant covered with a leproſy.

Naaman's cure, ſays Saint Ambroſe, is an emblem of the grace, by which the new-born Chriſtian is purified from the internal leproſy of ſin in the waters of baptiſm. Naaman had the happineſs not only to recover his corporal health, but what is infinitely more valuable, to partake alſo of the knowledge of ſalvation, and become a zealous adorer of the true God. Eliſeus would accept of none of the precious gifts he offered him, and thereby ſets an example of that amiable diſintereſtedneſs, which ought to animate every Chriſtian in the offices of charity towards his neighbour; he gave gratis, what he had gratis received. The juſt ſeverity he ſhowed in puniſhing the covetouſneſs of his ſervant, is a warning for all maſters and perſons in authority to be upon their guard, leſt by ſuffering or conniving at the ſins, committed by their ſervants and dependants, they make themſelves alſo partakers of their guilt.

§ XVIII. *Siege of Samaria.* 4 *Kings* 6.

A. M. 3116. *Before J. C.* 884. ELISEUS had requeſted and obtained the twofold gift of prophecy and miracles; he ſhone both in the one and the other. In a war between the kings of Iſrael and Syria, the Syrians ſeem to have relied more upon art than open force. Frequent ambuſhes were laid, in which the king of Iſrael muſt have been ſurpriſed, if Eliſeus by the ſupernatural knowledge he had of things, had not given him timely notice. The king of Syria, perceiving that his ſchemes were conſtantly diſcovered to his enemy, undoubtedly concluded, that he had ſome traitor near him.

But

But being assured that Eliseus was the man, who defeated all his stratagems, he detached a body of his troops to take him. Eliseus was then at Dothan; the Syrians invested it by night, which the prophet's servant perceiving when he rose in the morning, gave himself and master up for lost. The holy prophet bade him not fear; he assured him, that there was a more numerous and more powerful host at hand ready to protect them, and by his prayers obtained of God to let his servant see the celestial army, that stood arrayed for their defence upon the mountain. The same prayer, which opened the servant's eyes, shut those of the Syrians. Almighty God at his request struck them with blindness: Eliseus went out to meet them, as they advanced, and told them, that they had mistaken their way, and were come to the wrong city; that if they would follow him, he would conduct them to the place, and to the man, they wanted. They agreed to follow him, for they saw not, where they were; and he led them straight to Samaria. When he had them in the middle of the town, he prayed, that their eyes might be then opened, and discover to them the situation they were in. Joram was inclined to put them to the sword; but the prophet representing to him, that he had no right to use such violence against men, who had not been taken according to the rules of war, he consented to let them have a refreshment of meat and drink, and be sent back to their master. This act of generosity did not disarm the malice of the Syrian king. Being implacable in his animosity against the Israelites, he drew his troops together, and laid siege to Samaria. By the length and closeness of the siege, the Samaritans were reduced to such extremities, that they eat of the most disgustful things, not to perish by famine: an ass's head and a certain measure of pigeons dung, was sold at an exorbitant price; the common provisions of life could not be had for money. Then it was, that happened the melancholy story of a woman, who having killed and feasted upon her own child, came to throw herself at the king's feet, demanding justice against her neighbour. The king desired to know the subject of her complaint.

A neighbouring woman and myſelf, ſaid ſhe, being forced by neceſſity, agreed to kill and eat our own children. We began with mine; we boiled my ſon, and eat him: ſhe promiſed to produce hers the next day, but now refuſes to perform her promiſe, and has concealed him. Joram rent his garments thro' grief at the ſad relation: racked with deſpair at the ſight of evils, for which there appeared no help, he put on a rough hair-cloth next his ſkin; he mortified his fleſh, but turned not his heart from ſin: void of the humble ſentiments of a contrite heart, he directed his ſpleen againſt the holy prophet Eliſeus, whom he made anſwerable for the diſtreſſes of Samaria, and therefore commanded one of his officers to go and ſtrike off his head.

Such are the diſmal effects of a fretful and impatient pride in a man, who lets himſelf be once caſt down by immoderate affliction. Joram was diſtreſſed by his misfortunes, but not humbled; diffident of the divine goodneſs, he abandoned himſelf to deſpair, and ſent an aſſaſſin to kill the prophet, who by his ſanctity prorogued the fall of Samaria. Chriſtians, who balance the evils of the preſent life in the ſcale of divine faith, make a very different uſe of the afflictions they meet with; becauſe whatever pains they ſuffer, they reflect that their ſufferings are ſtill leſs, than their ſins deſerve. Trained to trials in the ſchool of Chriſt, they humble themſelves under the powerful hand of God, whom they are taught to conſider, not as a judge delighting in the puniſhment of his enemies, but as a tender father wiſhing to reclaim his children from ſin, and therefore patiently ſubmit to the chaſtiſing rod, becauſe they know he chaſtiſes, whom he loves, and only ſtrikes, becauſe he loves.

§ XIX. *Prediction of Eliſeus.* 4 *Kings* 7.

A. M. 3116, *Before J. C.* 884. ELISEUS by the ſpirit of God knew the orders, that Joram had given to take away his life. He was ſitting with the ancients in his own houſe; he ordered the door

to

to be ſhut againſt any king's meſſenger, that might come: for he alſo knew, that the king himſelf would quickly follow. In effect the king came, and as he made his complaint of the extreme diſtreſs, to which Samaria was then reduced, the prophet conſoled him with the promiſe of ſpeedy relief: at this time to-morrow, ſaid he, a buſhel of meal within the gate of Samaria ſhall be had for a ſtater, that is, for leſs than half a crown. Upon which one of the chief courtiers ſaid, that could not poſſibly be, altho' the Lord ſhould make flood-gates in heaven; nevertheleſs thou ſhalt ſee it with thine own eyes, replied the prophet, and yet, ſhalt not taſte thereof. The following night an alarm was given in the Syrian camp, that an enemy was in full march to attack them. Their fears made them fancy, that they actually heard the claſh of arms, and the ſound of chariots ruſhing on to war; in the hurry of their fright they concluded it to be an army of auxiliaries, that the king of Iſrael had taken into his ſervice, and ran pell-mell out of their tents, being only ſolicitous to eſcape with their lives through the dark. The Iſraelites remained pent up within their walls, ignorant of this confuſion amongſt their enemies. But four leprous men, who reſided near the gate, ſeeing no proſpect of an end being put to the ſiege, thought they had better truſt themſelves to the enemy's mercy, then remain to periſh there by famine. They went over to the Syrian camp, and to their great ſurpriſe found it abandoned. Their firſt concern was to ſatisfy the rage of hunger; for they ſaw themſelves in the midſt of plenty, and not an enemy near to moleſt them. When they had ſatisfied their craving appetite, they ranged from tent to tent, and began to make a collection of the gold and ſilver ſpoils, that tempted them on every ſide. They then ſpoke to one another upon this unaccountable departure of the enemy, and concluded that it would be looked upon as an unpardonable crime in them not to inform the diſtreſt citizens of theſe good tidings before morning: they therefore ran back to the town-gate, and informed the guard of the diſcovery they had made. Joram ſuſpected ſome ſtrata-

gem, and ordered his men to keep close within the walls, till he had learnt, what was become of the enemy. He had five horses still left; he ordered two of them to be mounted and sent to reconnoitre. By the quantities of plate and precious raiment, that lined the high-ways, the flying Syrians were traced as far as the river Jordan; which being told in Samaria at the return of the two spies, the citizens poured out in crouds to the camp, from whence they carried off such heaps of riches and provisions, that at the very hour foretold by Eliseus the day before, a bushel of meal was sold for a stater in the gate of Samaria: and to verify the second part of the prediction, the incredulous courtier, who had laughed at the Prophet's promise, being stationed at the town gate by order of the king, was trodden to death by the throng; he lived long enough to see, but not to taste of the promised plenty.

It is impossible, says saint Ambrose, not to adore God in the wonders he performs. The whole extent of futurity is always present to his view, and to his faithful servants he discovers as much of it, as is conducive to his adorable ends. He miraculously interposed his divine power in favour of a city, which he set free at the very time, that its destruction was thought to be inevitable. He cast a sudden panic into the insulting Syrians, he scattered their numerous army, like dust before the wind, and four discarded lepers were the messengers of Samaria's delivery. Amidst the joyful transports of a people so unexpectedly snatched from ruin, only one man was hurt: a great one of the world was trampled under foot by the vulgar croud; a dishonourable death was the punishment of his disrespect to God's holy prophet. For God beholds the disrespect which is shown to the ministers of his holy word, as shown to himself; for he links their honour and his own together: whoever despises them, despises him.

§ XX.

§ XX. *Jezabel devoured by dogs.* 4 *Kings* 9.

DURING theſe tranſactions in the kingdom of Iſrael, Joſaphat had been ſucceeded in the crown of Juda by his ſon Joram. This unhappy prince inherited no ſhare of his father's virtues; for in wickedneſs he reſembled the kings of Iſrael, becauſe, ſays the ſacred text, he had for his wife a daughter of Achab. He murdered his brothers, and introduced the worſhip of Baal amongſt his ſubjects. The puniſhment of theſe crimes was the loſs of Edom, which revolted and became independent of the crown of Juda. He was likewiſe ſtruck with a long and painful illneſs, which put an end to his ſhort and miſerable reign. His ſon Ochozias ſucceeded him both in his crown and vices. This young king maintained the cloſe friendſhip and alliance, that his father always had obſerved with the king of Iſrael, whom he aided and accompanied in the war, he had upon his hands againſt the Syrians. The time, that the Lord had fixed for the utter extirpation of Achab's race, as Elias had foretold, was at hand. The faſting and the haircloth, in which that wicked prince had humbled himſelf, when the Prophet forewarned him of his doom, had moved Almighty God, as the text expreſſes, to put off the full completion of his puniſhment to the days of his ſon Joram. Thoſe days were now come, and the Prophet's ſentence againſt Jezabel was carried into execution. Joram had received a dangerous wound in battle, and was carried to the town of Jezrahel to be cured: his friend & nephew, Ochozias the king of Juda, went to ſee him. In the mean while Jehu, who was an officer in the army, and had already been anointed king of Iſrael, being as impatient of delay, as he was ambitious of a crown, and being moreover encouraged by the officers of the army, reſolved upon a ſtroke, that ſhould put him in immediate poſſeſſion of the throne he had in view. He marched off with a troop of ſoldiers towards the town of Jezrahel. The ſentinel at his approach gave notice, that an army was

A. M. 3120. *Before J. C.* 880.

in ſight. Joram ſent out two different meſſengers one after the other to know, what the matter was. But as neither of them returned to give him any account, he ordered his chariot to be prepared, being determined to go and meet the troop in perſon: Ochozias the king of Juda attended him in another chariot. Jehu was now advanced as far as the field, that once belonged to the unhappy Naboth. There the two kings, Joram and Ochozias, met him. Joram aſked, if his intentions were peace, and finding by Jehu's anſwer, that no peace was to be expected, he turned about and fled off, crying out to Ochozias, that they were betrayed. Jehu that inſtant bent his bow, and ſhot him between the ſhoulders: the arrow went thro' his heart, and he fell dead in his chariot. The bloody corpſe was by Jehu's orders immediately caſt out into the field, and there left to the dogs, according to the word of the Lord ſpoken by Elias. Ochozias drove a different way, but was ſoon overtaken and mortally wounded. He fled to Mageddo, and there died. His ſervants laid him upon his chariot and carried him to Jeruſalem, where he was interred in the ſepulchre of his forefathers, in the city of David. Jehu marched on to Jezrahel, and Jezabel began to tremble for herſelf. She had no reſource, but in the artifices of her ſex. She therefore decked her head, and painted her face with all the art, ſhe was miſtreſs of; ſhe ſtood looking out of a window upon the ſtreet, and called aloud to Jehu, as he rode along. Jehu looked up, and aſking, who ſhe was, bade the eunuchs, that were by, throw her headlong down. The wall was ſprinkled with her blood, as ſhe fell, and her body was trampled on by the horſes hoofs. No one durſt preſume to take up the corpſe, till Jehu in conſideration of her being a king's daughter, gave orders for her burial. When they came to take up her body, they found nothing of its remains, beſides the ſkull and extremities of her hands and feet; for the dogs had devoured the reſt, and the prediction of Elias was literally fulfilled.

Such was the end of that unhappy woman, who by her violences had ſerved, as an inſtrument in the hand of God

God, for the chaſtiſement of a ſinful people. She was not ignorant of the truth, ſays ſaint Ambroſe, and yet ſtrove to oppreſs it: being bent upon the ſupport of thoſe falſe prophets, who flattered her, ſhe never ceaſed to perſecute the true prophets of the Lord. Her preſumption, ſays this holy Father, induced her to decide and regulate every thing, that concerned religion and the divine ſervice: her ſtrong paſſion was to blot out every remaining mark of the true religion, and by a juſt judgment of God ſcarce any remains of her mangled body could be diſcovered after her death.

§ XXI. *A dead man raiſed to life.* 4 *Kings* 14.

JEHU was not leſs violent in the meaſures he took to ſecure the crown of Iſrael to himſelf, than he had been active in acquiring it; and while from a principle of policy, he uſed that violence for the ſake of promoting his own ends, he became the executor of God's decrees againſt the houſe of Achab. He extirpated the male iſſue of that wicked race, according to the prediction of Elias, and the heads of no fewer than ſeventy of Achab's ſons were ſent to him in baſkets by the citizens and chief men of Samaria. Being thus ſettled without any viſible competitor in the throne, he undertook to exterminate the worſhip of Baal, which Jezabel had introduced and ſtrenuouſly promoted. An enterpriſe of that nature he thought might be attended with ſome tumult and confuſion, ſhould he proceed by ſlow degrees, or openly avow his intention. He therefore artfully diſguiſed his deſign, and made the idolatrous prophets believe, that he was more zealouſly devoted to Baal, than Achab himſelf had been. He proclaimed a feſtival in honour of Baal, and ſent thro' his kingdom to require their attendance in the temple of their god. Of them all not one failed on the day appointed: they entered the temple of Baal, which they filled with their numbers from one end to the other. Jehu commanded his ſoldiers, who were already

A. M. 3120, *Before J. C.* 880.

already prepared, to fall upon them, and not let ſo much as one eſcape. The ſoldiers executed his orders, demoliſhed the temple, broke the idol into pieces, and converted the place, where it ſtood, into a houſe of office. This zeal, that Jehu ſhowed againſt the worſhip of Baal, was acceptable to God, who in reward thereof promiſed, that his ſons ſhould ſit upon the throne of Iſrael to the fourth generation. Happy had he been, if he had gone one ſtep further, and eſtabliſhed the true religion upon the ruins of idolatry: but, unfortunately for himſelf and ſubjects, he retained the idolatrous worſhip of Jeroboam's golden calves, which after a reign of eight and twenty years he tranſmitted to his ſon Joachaz. Joachaz was perpetually harraſſed by the calamities of war, which were poured upon his kingdom by Hazael, the king of Syria. Hazael, as we have ſeen, had been anointed king by the expreſs command of God himſelf, and was now employed to ſcourge the ſins of Iſrael. By the advantages he gained, and by the devaſtations he made in the country, he left Joachaz no more than fifty horſemen, ten chariots, and ten thouſand foot, the ſcanty remnants of his numerous armies. Joachaz was not reclaimed by misfortunes; after a wicked and inglorious reign of ſeventeen years, he died in his ſins, and had for ſucceſſor his ſon Joas. About the beginning of this king's reign died the great Eliſeus. Joas, wicked as he was, had a veneration for the holy prophet, and made him a viſit upon his death-bed. The prophet promiſed the king victory againſt his enemies, in reward of his charity: he bade him ſhoot an arrow out of the window, that looked againſt Syria, and to ſtrike the ground with his javelin. The king ſtruck the ground thrice: Eliſeus was diſpleaſed, that he had not ſtruck it oftener. Three times only ſhalt thou ſtrike thine enemies, ſaid he; if thou hadſt ſtruck the ground ſix or ſeven times, thou then hadſt purſued the Syrians to deſtruction. Eliſeus died, and the glory, for which he had been ſo renowned on account of his miracles during life, accompanied him even in the tomb. For in the ſame year of his death, ſome inhabitants of the country were carrying

a dead man to be buried, and being ſuddenly terrified at the appearance of a roving party of Moabites, they haſtily threw him into the grave of Eliſeus. The dead body no ſooner touched the bones of the holy prophet, but the man came to life, and ſtood upon his feet.

Great no doubt, ſays Saint Ambroſe, is the miracle, by which a dead body is reſtored to life: it is what we juſtly admire in the Saints and in Jeſus Chriſt himſelf: but the reſurrection of a ſoul from the death of ſin to a life of grace, is infinitely more worthy of our attention. When the body thus revives, it is ſoon to die again: ſuch a life is no more than the beginning of another death; but the life, that a ſoul recovers by being called from the ſtate of mortal ſin, is the beginning of a life, that never ends; its happineſs is to be with God in everlaſting glory. To be recalled from the grave like Lazarus, is a privilege, which no one is to expect; but to riſe by repentance from the ſlavery of ſin to the friendſhip of Almighty God, is the hope of every ſinner. It is a work, which no one of himſelf can do; it is the effect of the life-giving grace of Jeſus Chriſt. By his ſupernatural grace alone we are enabled to riſe after our fall, and his grace is never wanting to thoſe, who are ſerious in their endeavours to deſerve it.

§ XXII. *Zacharias ſtoned to death.* 2 *Chron.* 23, 24.

UPON the death of Ochozias, king of Juda, who was ſlain by Jehu, as has been related, his mother Athalia, a wicked and ambitious woman, ſeated herſelf on the throne in prejudice of her grandchildren, whom ſhe ordered to be ſecretly put to death. The royal children, in conſequence of this cruel order, were all murdered, excepting Joas the youngeſt, whom Joſabeth the ſiſter of Ochozias, and wife to Joiada the high-prieſt, ſtole out of the nurſery, and ſecreted in the temple. Athalia enjoyed the power, ſhe had uſurped, during the ſpace of ſix years, when Joiada, being weary of her tyranny, thought

A. M. 3146, *Before J. C.* 854.

thought it time to acquaint the Jewiſh nation, that there was a prince of the blood-royal ſtill alive, to whom the crown and their allegiance were due. He had taken care to gain the officers of the guards beforehand; he had engaged the Levites and the chiefs of the families of Juda in his intereſt; he had taken every precaution neceſſary to ſupport his undertaking; he then ſet the crown upon Joas's head, and proclaimed him king by ſound of trumpet. The people teſtified their approbation by loud ſhouts of joy: Athalia was alarmed at the ſound; ſhe rent her garments, but hoping that her preſence might awe the people back to her obedience, ſhe ran from the palace to the temple, where ſhe had the confuſion to ſee the young Joas arrayed with the enſigns of royalty, and ſurrounded by the princes. She cried out, Treaſon! treaſon! and the high-prieſt commanded the captains and chiefs of the army to lead her forth beyond the precincts of the temple, where without any effort made for her defence, the ſword put an end to her life and uſurpation. Every thing after her death ſeemed to promiſe peace and proſperity to the kingdom of Juda. Joas in his youth retained a grateful reſpect for the virtuous Joiada, to whoſe fidelity he ſtood indebted for his crown; he willingly liſtened to his inſtructions, and governed himſelf by his advice. He was ſhocked to ſee the ruinous condition, to which the impiety of Athalia had reduced the houſe of God: it had not been repaired for years; it was exhauſted of its treaſures, which had been either ſquandered away, or miſapplied to the temple of Baal. He wiſhed to ſee it reſtored to its primitive luſtre; but his treaſury was not in a condition to anſwer the expenſe. A proclamation was therefore made in Juda and Jeruſalem, that every man ſhould bring to the Lord the money, which Moyſes had appointed to be paid by the Iſraelites, when they were in the deſert; and a cheſt was placed by the right ſide of the altar, to receive the money and voluntary contributions, that were brought by the people for the repairs of the temple. Workmen were immediately ſet to work ſtone and timber provided to make every neceſſary repair of the houſe of the Lord, and

all

all the expenſes defrayed with the money, that was taken out of the public cheſt; whatever money remained beſides, was employed about the ſacred veſſels. Piety and religion flouriſhed, as long as Joiada lived. He died in the hundred and thirtieth year of his age, and on account of the eminent ſervices he had done his country, was interred amongſt the kings of Juda. Soon after his death, a very different face of things was ſeen in Juda. A croud of wicked flatterers immediately beſet the throne; their ſervile adulation pleaſed a weak prince; they wound themſelves into favour, and undid all, that the wiſe and virtuous Joiada had done. It is commonly the fate of kings to adopt the ſentiments of thoſe, who ſurround them. Joas became the very reverſe of what he was before: Joas, guided by Joiada, had taken great pains to repair the temple and re-eſtabliſh the honour of Almighty God: Joas, ſurrounded by impious flatterers, ſet up idols and adored them. This rouſed the zeal of Zacharias, who had ſucceeded his father Joiada in the dignity of high-prieſt. With a holy liberty he repreſented to the king and his courtiers the nature of their offence, and how odious their abominations were to the God of their religious forefathers. His repreſentation had no other effect, than that of his own martyrdom: for Joas, without reſpect either to the father or the ſon, of whom the firſt had reſtored him to his throne, and the latter was now exhorting him to an indiſpenſable act of duty, ſentenced Zacharias, the ſon of Joiada, to be ſtoned to death, which was executed in the great court between the altar and the temple. The holy prieſt patiently ſubmitted to the ſentence, and amidſt his ſufferings only begged, that the Lord would ſee, and do him juſtice. His prayer was heard; the reign of an ungrateful king became more miſerable in the end, than it had been happy in the beginning. Within a twelvemonth after he had ſet up his idols, and murdered the high-prieſt, the Syrians broke in upon him, and with a handful of men routed an infinite multitude of Jews, becauſe they had forſaken the Lord the God of their fathers, ſays the ſacred

ſacred text, and on Joas they executed ſhameful judgments. Full of pains and diſeaſes Joas dragged out a wretched life, till in puniſhment of the murder of Zacharias the ſon of Joiada, he was aſſaſſinated in his bed by two of his own ſervants, after a reign of forty years. They buried him in the city of David, but not in the ſepulchre of the kings his predeceſſors.

The end of this unhappy prince muſt naturally awaken the attention of thoſe, whoſe ſtation in life expoſes them to the flattery of falſe friends. The language of a man, who pours his incenſe, where he has an intereſt to purſue, or a favour to hope for, cannot be too carefully guarded againſt: it is always to be ſuſpected. A flatterer is a ſtranger to ſincerity; he fawns and praiſes, he ſmiles and careſſes, with no other view than to gain his own ſelfiſh ends: deceit is his practice, and intereſt his motive. Flattery is the ſure mark of a baſe diſpoſition; it betrays a weakneſs both in him, who gives, and in him, who takes it.

§ XXIII. *The prophet Jonas. Jonas* 1.

A. M. 3197. *Before J. C.* 803. JOAS was ſucceeded by his ſon Amaſias. This prince like his father began his reign in proſperity, but ended with diſgrace. Having vanquiſhed the Idumeans in battle, he took away their idols, and ſet them up in his own dominions. This impious conduct drew upon him the diſpleaſure of Almighty God. He was in his turn vanquiſhed by Joas king of Iſrael, taken and led a priſoner into his own city of Jeruſalem. He remained in confinement till the death of Joas, when he recovered his liberty, reigned for ſome years, and was at laſt murdered by his own ſubjects. Joas being maſter of the city of Jeruſalem, demoliſhed a great part of the wall, and carried away with him the treaſures of the temple to Samaria. This king having checked the Syrians by the ſeveral victories, that Eliſeus had promiſed him, and recovered the cities, which his father had loſt, left his ſon Jeroboam

Jeroboam to carry on, what he had proſperouſly begun. Jeroboam, the ſecond of that name, was a wicked, but valiant prince; by his abilities and ſucceſs in war, he reſtored the kingdom of Iſrael to its ancient territories, and confined the Syrians to the limits of their own empire.

Under this king lived the prophet Jonas, well known for his miſſion to the great city of Ninive. The humble prophet thought himſelf unequal to an undertaking of that importance, tho' called to it by God himſelf: hoping to eſcape the arduous taſk by flight, he embarked on board a ſhip, that was bound for Tharſis. But vain are the ſchemes of men, when formed in contradiction to the decrees of God. A violent ſtorm aroſe at ſea, and the ſhip was in the utmoſt danger of being loſt. The trembling mariners ſhuddered with fear, and cried aloud on their God to ſave them. They began to lighten the veſſel by throwing part of their cargo overboard; they bewailed their misfortune, and concluded, that their preſent diſtreſs muſt be owing to ſome one of the crew, who by his ſins had provoked the divine anger. Jonas, conſcious of his diſobedience, had retired apart into the lower part of the ſhip, where he fell aſleep. The captain called him up, and bade him pray for their eſcape. The mariners had recourſe to lots, in order to find out the cauſe, why the preſent evil had befallen them: they caſt the lots, and the lot fell upon Jonas; Jonas frankly owned himſelf guilty, told them, who he was, and why he had tried to fly from the face of God. He declared himſelf ready to reſign his life for the ſafety of the reſt, that to calm the ſea, and ſave themſelves from ſhipwreck, they muſt take and throw him in, as he knew it was on his account, that they had been overtaken by the ſtorm. The mariners ſtood aſtoniſhed at his candid confeſſion, admired his generoſity, and the fortitude of his mind. Unwilling to haſten the death of a man, who ſeemed ſo worthy of life, they plyed their oars, and ſtretched every nerve to weather the ſtorm, and regain the ſhore: but ſeeing their utmoſt efforts were to no purpoſe, and their danger

danger increasing every moment, they made pity give way to fear, and threw the prophet into the sea. The sea that instant soothed its waves, and the tempest ceased. Kind providence, ever mindful of his servants, would not suffer Jonas to perish, who to save the lives of others, had thus generously made a sacrifice of his own. A huge fish was at hand to receive him, as he fell. Shut up in the whale's belly, Jonas continued three days and three nights, not only safe from harm, but also master of his thoughts and reason; so that he there composed an admirable hymn of thanksgiving to the Lord, his great preserver and deliverer. The fish spewed him out upon the shore alive and unhurt. From the jaws of death he came forth in a most wonderful manner the lively figure of Jesus Christ, who in the same, tho' infinitely more glorious manner, was to rise from the tomb and bowels of the earth, triumphant over the powers of death and hell.

§ XXIV. *Penitence of the Ninivites. Jonas* 3.

A. M. 3197, *Before J. C.* 803. ALMIGHTY God repeated his first orders to Jonas, commanding him to rise and go to Ninive. Of the many prophets who had been employed in the ministry of God's word, Jonas was the first, who preached to the Gentiles, and in that became the representative of Jesus Christ, from whom the grace of salvation flows both upon Jew and Gentile. The prophet being taught by affliction to submit himself to the divine will, made no further objection against the command, that was given him, but immediately set forward to perform it. Ninive was the capital of the Assyrian empire, a city so great and extensive, that it was a three days journey to go through it. Jonas advanced one day's journey through the streets, declaring to the citizens, who flocked to hear him, that by the end of forty days Ninive should be no more. A threat so terrible and so urgent drew the attention of his hearers, and threw a deadly consternation through the whole

whole city. Conſcious of crimes the moſt enormous, the Ninivites knew they deſerved the ſevereſt judgment, they gave credit to the prophet's words, and humbled themſelves before the Lord. With a true diſpoſition of repentance they proclaimed a general faſt; from the higheſt to the loweſt, the little and the great cloathed themſelves with ſackcloth, that as all had ſinned, all likewiſe might repent, and by a general penance obtain a general pardon. The king was no leſs alarmed than his people; he equally believed the prophet; he deſcended from his throne, laid his royal robes aſide, put on a coarſe ſack, and ſat himſelf down upon aſhes, as a mark of his repentance. He likewiſe publiſhed an order, that neither man nor beaſt ſhould eat or drink the leaſt thing; that all his ſubjects ſhould turn from their evil ways, and with united prayers and tears ſhould ſtrive to draw down the divine mercy. Who knows, ſaid he, but God may take compaſſion of and pardon us? He may perhaps reverſe his threats, and ſave us? The king's hopes did not deceive him. Almighty God only waited for the repentance of a ſinful people to grant them pardon. He foreſaw their penance, he employed his threats to gain it. Moved by the cries, and ſoftened by the tears of a repenting city, he did not execute the ſentence which he had inſpired his prophet to pronounce; out of regard to their penitential works, he reſerved the Ninivites to puniſh the crimes of the unrepenting Iſraelites. This example of the citizens of Ninive is recorded in holy writ, not only to ſhow the merit of faſting and penitential works, but alſo to encourage ſinners to a true repentance: it is mentioned by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, and it will cover thoſe Chriſtians with confuſion, who notwithſtanding the threats pronounced by Jeſus Chriſt in his Goſpel againſt ſinners, perſiſt in their evil courſes, till the days of pardon and repentance are no more.

§ XXV.

§ XXV. *Jonas's complaint. Jonas* 4.

A. M. 3197, *Before J. C.* 803. JONAS, being ſenſible that the deſtruction of Ninive was prevented thro' the repentance of its inhabitants, began to be afraid of paſſing for a falſe prophet. Inſtead of rejoicing, as he ought, at the proſpect of ſo many thouſands being preſerved from preſent deſtruction, and preſerved by his own happy concurrence, he let himſelf be depreſſed with grief; he prayed to die rather than to live, becauſe the event did not turn out, as he had expected. He went out of the city, and at ſome diſtance from it having made himſelf a bower to ſcreen his head from the ſcorching ſun, he there ſat himſelf down under its ſhade, and waited to ſee, what would befall the city. Almighty God, who not only ſees, but frequently ſtoops to the weakneſſes of men, that they may become more ſenſible of his goodneſs towards them, cauſed an ivy-tree to grow up during the night, which ſpreading its matted branches over the bower, formed a cloſe ſhelter againſt the rays of the ſun. The prophet was overjoyed to ſee it in the morning; but his joy was only for that day: for at night the ſame divine power, that had raiſed the tree, deſtroyed its ſheltering foliage: a little worm, prepared by the hand of God, ſtruck the ivy, and it withered. When the ſun was riſen, a hot and burning wind heated the air: the ſun beat upon the head of Jonas, and he was ſcorched with the exceſſive heat. The loſs of his ivy made him alſo more impatient, and in the depth of his affliction he again wiſhed to die. Then it was, that the anguiſh of his ſoul diſpoſed him to comprehend the truth, which the Lord was pleaſed to make him ſenſible of. Thou art afflicted, ſaid Almighty God to him, and thinkeſt thou haſt reaſon, becauſe thy ivy is dead; yet thou didſt not contribute either to plant, or to make it grow: it went away as quickly, as it came; in one night it grew up, and periſhed in the next. Thou grieveſt at the deſtruction of a thing, which thou didſt but begin to enjoy, and ſhall I not be moved at the deſtruction

ſtruction of a city ſo great as Ninive? There are more than a hundred and twenty thouſand perſons, who know not their right hand from their left, and ought I to be inſenſible of their misfortune, or ought I not to have mercy and to ſpare?

§ XXVI. *Impiety of Achaz.* 4 *Kings* 16.

AFTER Amaſias was ſlain, as we have ſaid, by his own ſubjects, *A. M.* 3263. *Before J. C.* 737. Ozias his ſon, who is alſo called Azarias, at the age of ſixteen mounted the throne of Juda. He was a prince of great abilities, which he employed for the good of his ſubjects, and increaſe of religion, till towards the end of his life he forgot his ſtation, and attempted the ſacred functions, that were peculiar to prieſts. Being elated by the long proſperity, which had accompanied his reign for upwards of fifty years, he treſpaſſed upon the rights of Aaron's prieſthood, and preſumed to offer incenſe upon the altar of perfumes. Azarias the high-prieſt, with eighty attendants of the ſacerdotal order, repaired immediately to the temple, and repreſented to him the raſhneſs of his attempt. The king was deaf to all Azarias ſaid; he ſtood with the cenſer in his hand, and threatened aloud to kill any man, that ſhould offer to interrupt him in the ceremony: he overawed the ſpectators with fear, when, behold! the marks of a ſpreading leproſy began to appear upon his forehead. The prieſts immediately ran up, and thruſt him out of the ſanctuary: he himſelf was glad to get out of ſight, as ſpeedily as he could, to conceal his ſhame, which was the puniſhment of his pride. Being no longer worthy to converſe with, or to be ſeen by men, he ſhut himſelf up in a private apartment, and reſigned the reins of government to his ſon Joathan. Joathan was an excellent prince, and poſſeſſed of every quality, that conſtitutes a great and virtuous king. He reigned no more than ſixteen years, when he was ſucceeded by his ſon Achaz, the worſt of men, that had yet diſgraced the crown of Juda.

Vicious

Vicious by nature, and by principal addicted to the ſuperſtitions of the kings of Iſrael, he caſt ſtatues to Baal, and renewed the abominations of adolatry even in the holy city. He took down the great laver, and removed Salomon's brazen altar, in the place of which he erected another, made after the faſhion of an altar he had ſeen at Damaſcus. He ſhut up the temple, he purified his ſon by fire, according to the rites of the Gentiles; he offered ſacrifices and burnt incenſe upon the hills and under every green tree. Urias the high prieſt temporiſed with the king in every act of impiety, ſo that the infection ſpread thro' the whole nation. In puniſhment of this univerſal corruption, the kingdom was moſt miſerably torn to pieces, and plundered of its riches by the kings of Iſrael and Syria. No leſs than a hundred and twenty thouſand of the troops of Juda were ſlain in one day, and two hundred thouſand women and children, with an immenſe booty, were carried away to Samaria. Far from becoming better by thoſe dreadful ſtrokes of divine juſtice, Achaz ſtill plunged himſelf and his people into freſh calamities by an alliance, that he made with Theglathphalaſar, the king of Aſſyria, to whom he made his kingdom tributary. He ſtript the temple and his own palace of their coſtly furniture and treaſures, to purchaſe the friendſhip of this new ally, from whom he received no help: for the Aſſyrian monarch having only his own intereſt in view, plundered every thing, that came in his way, whether it belonged to Juda or to Iſrael. He made himſelf maſter of all the lands of Iſrael, that lay on the eaſt ſide of Jordan, and led the inhabitants away with him into Aſſyria. This was the beginning of that fatal captivity, which was ſoon to put an end to the whole kingdom of Iſrael. But this did not alarm the wicked Achaz; the more he was chaſtiſed, the more reprobate he grew: he attributed his loſſes not to the divine hand, which ſcourged him for his crimes, but to a ſuperior power in the Syrian idols. He therefore immolated victims to the gods of Damaſcus, ſet up their ſtatues at the corner of every ſtreet in Jeruſalem, and built them altars in the cities of Juda, where he ordered frankincenſe to

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be burnt in their honour. Provoked by such outrages, God would no longer bear with his impiety; by an untimely death he snatched him out of life, in the thirty-sixth year of his age, and the sixteenth of his reign.

The impiety of this abandoned prince is a shocking spectacle of the depravity of human nature; and the obstinacy, with which he resisted every admonition, that was sent to make him sensible of his crimes, is a proof that obduracy of heart is the greatest punishment, which happens to a sinner on this side the grave: final impenitence is the beginning of that painful reprobation, which shall never end.

§ XXVII. *Destruction of the kingdom of Israel.* 4 *Kings* 17.

JEROBOAM the second swayed the sceptre of Israel with great temporal felicity for one and forty years, when after an interregnum of eleven years it descended to Zacharias, his son. Zacharias was the fourth generation from Jehu, and the last, who was to reign of that family, according to the prediction made by the Lord to that usurper. He reigned but six months, being slain by Sellum, who after one month's usurpation lost both the kingdom and his life, by the violence of Manahem. Manahem reigned ten years, and was succeeded by his son Phaceia, against whom Phacee the son of Romelia formed a successful conspiracy, and seized upon the crown. Phacee was the king, who made so destructive a war upon Achaz, the impious king of Juda. After a reign of twenty years, he was deposed and murdered by Osee, one of his subjects, and the last of the kings of Israel. The period fixed for the duration of that distracted kingdom was now run out: its subjects had for ages been a lawless, and incorrigible people; no end could be put to their idolatrous crimes, but by a dissolution of their empire. Of all the kings, who reigned in Israel from

A.M. 3282, *Before J.C.* 718.

from the time, that Jeroboam first divided the Hebrew people into two kingdoms, to its final dissolution, there is not one, whom for his wickedness the inspired writer does not absolutely condemn. They walked in the footsteps of their wicked founder Jeroboam; they adored his calves; they consecrated groves and places upon the hills for their superstitious sacrifices; they proscribed the ceremonies of the Jewish law, and adopted those of heathen nations; they, in fine, abandoned the God, who had brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and bent their knees to idols of their own workmanship. To reclaim them from their evil ways, and to bring them back to the religion of their forefathers, Almighty God never ceased to admonish them, either by temporal calamities, or by the preaching of his prophets. The magnificent temple of Jerusalem was a standing monument of the worship, they had left. But neither the zeal of Elias, nor the miracles of Eliseus, nor the temple of Salomon, had any effect upon those degenerate Israelites: therefore the Almighty determined to pour out the vengeance, with which he had long threatened them; he determined to root them out of the land, which he once had given them, and to make them vagabonds upon the face of the earth. Soon after Osee, their last king, had seized upon the crown, Salmanazar the king of Assyria, and son of Theglathphalasar, invaded the kingdom of Israel, and conquered it. Osee was permitted to retain his regal dignity, upon condition of paying tribute and acknowledging himself a vassal to the Assyrian monarch. This was an indignity, to which he resolved to stoop no longer, than necessity obliged him. He secretly applied to the king of Egypt for help against the Assyrians; which Salmanazar was no sooner apprised of, but he came back with a more powerful army than before, and laid siege to Samaria. The city held out against his attacks for three years, and upon its surrendry, the whole kingdom of Israel submitted to the conqueror. To prevent all future revolts, Salmanazar collected the inhabitants together, put them under the direction of proper leaders, and transported them into the territories of the

Medes

Medes and Aſſyrians. The Iſraelites from thence ſpread themſelves by degrees into the northern parts of Aſia, and neither they nor their poſterity ever returned into their own country, which was given to other inhabitants ſent from the provinces of Aſia. Thus an end was put to the kingdom of Iſrael, by a total ruin of the ten tribes, that compoſed it, two hundred and fifty four years after it had been firſt ſevered from that of Juda.

§ XXVIII. *The virtues of Tobias. Tob. 2.*

AMONGST the many thouſands of Iſraelites, who were led away by Salmanazar into Aſſyria, there was one, who for his virtues is diſtinguiſhed from the reſt, and whoſe hiſtory is recorded in holy writ for the inſtruction of after ages. He was of the tribe of Nephthali, by name Tobias. From his very childhood he ſhowed a wiſdom ſuperior to his age, being prudent in his words, and grave in his deportment. He never ſuffered himſelf to be led aſtray by the crouds of thoſe, who ran to adore the golden calves of Jeroboam, but went regularly, as the law preſcribed, to adore the God of Iſrael in the temple of Jeruſalem. Being bleſſed with a ſon, he thought it his great duty to be careful of his education, and to inſtruct him betimes in the fear of God. In this virtuous man the change of circumſtances and country made no alteration of principles and conduct: with the ſame ſteadineſs he walked in the ſame path of virtue; he made it his ſtudy and his practice to give all the comfort and aſſiſtance he could to his fellow captives. To conſole the afflicted, to help the ſick, and to bury the dead, were the daily exerciſes of his charity. Such virtues merited him a reward even in this life. He had full leave from the king to go where he ſhould think fit, a leave it ſeems not granted to the reſt of his countrymen. His uſual reſidence was at Ninive; but he freely went from one part of the country to another, as his charity *A. M.* 3286, *Before J. C.* 714.

charity and neighbour's neceſſity called him. Being at Rages, a town belonging to the Medes, he found a poor man of his own tribe, called Gabelus, in great diſtreſs, and as by the king's bounty he had money at his diſpoſal, he lent him ten talents of ſilver, taking his promiſſary note for the payment. After the death of Salmanazar, Sennacherib ſucceeded to the crown. This prince, being exaſperated at the deſtruction of his army in Judea, of which we ſhall have the account in the hiſtory of king Ezechias, was reſolved to revenge himſelf upon the captive Iſraelites, whom he perſecuted by various kinds of cruelty, putting many of them to death, and leaving their bodies without burial. Theſe freſh ſufferings of his brethen redoubled the good Tobias's activity in their ſervice. Sennacherib, to whom the virtues of humanity ſeem to have been even hateful, was offended at his charity, and gave orders for him to be put to death, and his goods confiſcated. This forced the holy man to fly not to loſe his life. He found a ſafe retreat amongſt his friends, of whom he had many, and by the tyrant's death, which happened ſoon after, he recovered his goods and former liberty. His charity was no longer reſtrained by fear, nor did the dangers and the hardſhips he had undergone, abate his zeal for the ſervice of his neighbour. In the midſt of an entertainment, which he had made for his friends, it was told him, that an Iſraelite had been juſt ſlain in the ſtreet: he immediately roſe from table, fetched away the corpſe, and concealed it in his houſe till night, when he buried it. His friends put him in mind of the danger he had but lately eſcaped, and ſaid, that his zeal was indiſcreet. Tobias, who had a greater regard for God than for men, would not let himſelf be talked out of his duty, nor would he ſuffer a dead body, that came in his way, to lie unburied. Being one day more than uſually tired with his pious labours, he chanced to lay himſelf down for a moment's reſt, near the wall of his houſe: a ſwallow had made her neſt above, and the hot dung happening to fall upon his eyes, as he lay expoſed, deprived him of his ſight. It was a misfortune the moſt grieveous, that

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could have befallen him; it ſeverely tried his patience, but did not ſhake his conſtancy in virtue. As he had been always active in doing good to others, as much as he could, ſo he was ſcrupulouſly nice not to concur in any thing, that might do them any wrong. His wife Anna, by the earnings of her labour, had ſaved enough to buy a kid, and had brought it home, unknown to Tobias. He heard the little animal bleat, and not knowing how it could come thither, aſked his wife, if it was not ſtolen. Anna thought herſelf injured by ſuch a queſtion, and began to revile him in very ſharp and unbecoming language. Tobias, patient as a Job, heard in ſilence: he made no reply, but with his other ſufferings offered this alſo to Almighty God, in attonement for his ſins and the ſins of his nation: for in all his afflictions he humbled himſelf beneath the hand of God, from whom he reſignedly received them; he was thankful for paſt favours, and being no longer able to ſerve his neighbour, he gave himſelf to prayer, and as having nothing more to do with life, begged Almighty God to receive his ſoul in peace.

Chriſtians read this hiſtory of Tobias, and juſtly may admire, when they find ſuch virtues practiſed in the midſt of an idolatrous people, and practiſed by a man, who under the diſcouragement of cenſure and reproach from his neareſt friends, had no example of Jeſus Chriſt to excite, and no Goſpel to enlighten him. When they view the demeanour of this holy man more minutely, and compare it with their own, they then may bluſh at the wide diſparity between themſelves and him, as the holy Fathers remark; the piety and patience of Tobias is a ſubject of emulation to the zealous Chriſtian, to the ſlothful a ſubject of confuſion.

§ XXIX. *Young Tobias and his Angel. Tob.* 5.

A. M. 3300, *Before J. C.* 700. TOBIAS thinking that his prayers for a ſpeedy releaſe from the toils of life were heard, and that his death was near, gave to his ſon the young Tobias, his laſt inſtructions: they were the inſtructions of a good father to an only ſon, the reſult of reaſon and the dictates of true piety; ſuch as every parent ought to recommend frequently to his children during life, and enforce at death. He charged him to be ever dutiful and attentive to his mother, to fear God, to guard againſt all ſin, eſpecially pride and impurity, to give alms according to his abilities, to adviſe with ſome prudent friend in every buſineſs of importance, and to be always diligent in holy prayer. After this, he informed him of the money, which was due to him from Gabelus, and which he deſired him to receive. This debt he had never mentioned to his ſon before, and mentioned it only now from a principle of juſtice, that his ſon might not loſe what belonged to him. The young man liſtened with dutiful reſpect to his aged father, and received his inſtructions, as ſpoken by a man, endowed with the wiſdom of God. He promiſed to comply with every injunction, as far as he was able; the only difficulty, that occurred, was how to recover the ten talents from Gabelus, of whom he knew nothing more than his name. The father told him he muſt look out for ſome faithful guide to ſhow him the way to Rages, and carry with him Gabelus's own hand-writing, as a proof of the debt. The obedient ſon went forth to look out for ſuch a perſon, and meeting with a comely young man in the appearance and equipage of a traveller ready for a journey, civilly ſaluted him; little thinking that under ſuch a diſguiſe was concealed the Angel, whom God by a ſpecial providence had appointed him for his guidance and protection. He aſked him, who he was and from whence, and whether he knew the way into the country of the Medes? The Angel replied, that he was one of Iſrael, and well acquainted with the roads

roads of that country; that he had been at Rages, and knew Gabelus. The young Tobias was overjoyed at his good fortune in meeting with a ſtranger ſo qualified and willing to attend him; he introduced him to his father, who was equally pleaſed with the candour and friendly promiſes of the comely youth, who called himſelf by the name of Azarias, that is to ſay, the help of God. Azarias comforted the good old man, who ſat bemoaning his misfortune in being no longer able to ſee the light of Heaven, aſſured him of a ſpeedy cure from God, and promiſed to conduct his ſon to Gabelus at Rages, and to bring him home again. Raphael therefore, the Archangel under the ſhape and name of a travelling Iſraelite, began to direct the ſteps of young Tobias with peculiar care, which has been always looked upon as a ſpecimen of that, which our guardian Angels have over us, and is a perfect model of that tender ſolicitude, which every paſtor ought to ſhow in taking care of his reſpective flock. Tobias bade his father and his mother farewell, and ſet off with his guide towards the country of the Medes, and the dog followed him. They travelled on together, till they came to the river Tigris: Tobias ſat himſelf down upon the bank to waſh his feet, when, behold! a monſtrous fiſh darted from the ſtream, as at its prey, to devour him. Struck with affright, he called upon his guide, who bade him take the fiſh by the gill, and draw him aſhore. He did ſo. The Angel moreover told him to take out the entrails of the fiſh, and lay up the heart, the liver, and the gall, as uſeful in medicine, and proper to drive away all kind of evil ſpirits. They roaſted part of the fleſh, the reſt they ſalted, and carried with them, as much as might ſerve, them till they arrived at Rages. When they came within ſight of the town, his guardian informed him, that they muſt lodge with one Raguel, a kinſman of his tribe, who lived in the country, and had an only daughter, whom he ſhould demand in marriage. Tobias was ſtartled at the propoſal, for he knew, that ſhe had been already given to ſeven different huſbands, one after another, who by the devil's malice had been all killed the very firſt night after

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ter their marriage. He dreaded the like misfortune; and what affected him still more, he was afraid, lest such an accident befalling him might also cause the death of his dear parents. Azarias reasoned away his fears, and assured him, that the devil's power extended only over those, who without any respect for God were guided more by sensuality, than by reason in their choice and use of matrimony. He then taught him in what manner he was to sanctify his marriage, and concluded by giving him such instructions, as deserve the serious consideration of those, who engage in the marriage state.

§ XXX. *Old Tobias recovers his sight. Tob.* 11.

A. M. 3800, *Before J. C.* 700. THE young Tobias according to the Angel's direction went to Raguel's house, where, tho' an entire stranger, he met with a friendly welcome. Raguel thought he discovered in the young man the features of his kinsman Tobias, and asked them, if they were acquainted with him? The man you enquire after, replied the Angel, is this young man's father. Raguel immediately threw his arms round his neck, and kissing him, with tears said, A blessing be upon thee, my son, because thou art the son of a good and virtuous man. Anna his wife, and Sarah their daughter, likewise wept. When the first salutations were over, he ordered an hospitable entertainment to be prepared. As soon as the dinner was ready, he desired them to sit down: Tobias took that opportunity of making his proposals to Raguel, and solemnly declared, that he could neither eat nor drink in his house, unless he would first promise to grant him his daughter Sarah in marriage. Raguel knew not what answer to make; for tho' he approved of the match, yet he durst not give his consent, knowing what had happened to her former husbands. As he therefore stood in suspense without making any answer, the Angel assured him, that his daughter had by a special providence been reserved for Tobias, and therefore no one hitherto could have

have her. Raguel had no further doubt; he took the right hand of his daughter and gave it into the right hand of Tobias, saying, The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, be with you, and may he join you together, and fulfil his blessing in you. The matrimonial contract was then taken down in writing; they made merry, and blessed God. When they retired at night into the chamber prepared for them, Tobias carefully observed every direction, which Azarias had given him; he took out of his bag part of the fishes liver, and broiled it upon the coals, that by its smoke it might chase away the evil spirit: he exhorted the virgin to join in prayer with him; because being the children of Saints, and not joined together like heathens, who know not God, they were thus to pass the three first nights in holy prayer and continence. Raguel in the interim expected nothing less than the death of Tobias, and had already ordered his grave to be prepared; but being agreeably surprised in the morning to find him safe and sound, he filled up the grave, and gave free scope to the transports of his joy. Tobias had his thoughts still turned upon his parents; he knew how uneasy they would be about him; the delay caused by his marriage was unavoidable, and after that his business with Gabelus must be done. He opened his mind to Azarias, and Azarias undertook to transact that affair for him, without any further loss of time. He took the note from him, went to Rages, received the money, and brought Gabelus with him to the feast. Gabelus wept for joy to see the son of his friend and kind benefactor; he embraced and kissed him. Tobias now began to be very solicitous about his parents; he pressed Raguel for his consent to return home. Raguel was charmed with his filial piety, delivered to him his daughter with half his substance in hand for her present portion, and promised the other half after his own and wife's decease. He and Anna his wife took their last farewell with the kindest expressions of love and tenderness; they kissed their daughter with tears in their eyes; they recommended

commended to her to love her husband, to honour her father and mother-in-law, to preserve order in her family, and to be particularly watchful over her own conduct. The good parents of Tobias were all this while in great anxiety about their son, whose absence began to seem very long. His mother went every day to the top of a hill, to see if she could descry him coming: she at last perceived him, and ran with great haste to impart the joyful tidings to her husband. The dog also, that had been the faithful attendant upon his master's steps, ran before, and by fawning and wagging his tail, confirmed the welcome news. The old father, who was blind, rose up, and giving a servant his hand, ran stumbling on to meet his son: they eagerly embraced each other; they poured out the tears of gladness into one another's bosom, and when they had adored and given thanks to God, they sat down together. The young Tobias produced the gall of the fish, as the Angel had told him, with which he rubbed his father's eyes, and restored him to his sight. He then gave them a faithful account of all, that had happened in his journey: his spouse arrived a few days after with all her flock and money, and nothing more was wanting to complete the happiness of Tobias's family. Their first concern was to reward the faithful guide, to whose services under God they attributed their good fortune: they offered him one half of their acquired substance. The Angel then thought it time to let them know, who he was: he told them, his name was Raphael, one of the seven spirits, that constantly attend before the throne of God; that he had been commissioned by Almighty God to accompany the son in that visible manner; that he had invisibly offered up the father's prayers to our Lord; that works of charity and devotion, fasting and almsdeeds, joined with prayer, were very acceptable in the eyes of God. He recommended to them a perseverance in the same holy practices, gave them his blessing, and vanished out of sight. Struck with religious awe, they fell prostrate upon the ground, where they remained for three hours in silent prayer: when they rose up, Tobias

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the father began to proclaim the praiſes of Almighty God for all his works, and in a prophetic ſtile rehearſed the greater wonders, which he was afterwards to accompliſh in his Church.

The venerable Tobias, who had ſeen ſuch ſcenes of human miſery both in and after the deſtruction of his country, lived two and forty years after he recovered his ſight, and died in a good old age paſt a hundred. He left behind him a faithful imitator of his piety, the young Tobias, who to all ſucceeding ages is ſet forth as a perfect image of that obedience and reſpect, which is due from children to their parents. He is a bright example to married perſons, teaching them by what virtues, they are to ſanctify themſelves in the marriage ſtate, and with what attention they are to inſtruct and educate their children, that the virtues of the fathers may with their names be tranſmitted by deſcent to the lateſt poſterity.

§ XXXI. *Ezechias king of Juda.* 4 *Kings* 18.

WHILST the miſerable Iſraelites were ſcattered thro' the Aſſyrian empire and groaning in captivity, the kingdom of Juda, which had been reduced to the brink of ruin under the wicked Achaz, began to recover itſelf under the pious Ezechias, who ſucceeded his father ſix years before the deſtruction of Iſrael. Ezechias was a religious prince, of whom the Scripture gives this teſtimony, that amongſt the kings, who ſwayed the ſceptre of Juda, either before or after him, there was not his equal: juſt by principle, and prudent in his conduct, he ſteadily adhered to the law of God, from which he never departed either to the right or to the left. Under his auſpices a new face of things was ſeen over the whole kingdom of Juda: where impiety and ſuperſtition prevailed before, true virtue and religion flouriſhed. He ſet open the gates of the Temple, which his father Achaz *A. M.* 3289, *Before J. C.* 711.

haz had ſhut; he ordered the Prieſts and Levites to ſanctify themſelves, that they might be worthy to purify the Sanctuary, which had been profaned. The table of ſhow-bread, the altar, and the ſacred veſſels, were reſtored; the ancient ceremonies of religious worſhip were renewed, and holocauſts offered to the Lord amidſt the ſolemn ſounds of vocal and inſtrumental muſic. He cut down the ſacrilegious groves, removed every object of ſuperſtitious worſhip, and amongſt other things broke to pieces the brazen ſerpent, which from Moyſes's time had been reſpectfully preſerved, but by abuſe was at laſt become a ſubject of ſcandal to the people. For the encouragement of the Levites to attend their ſacred functions, he renewed the laws reſpecting the payment of tythes and firſt-fruits. Such public virtues and ſuch zeal for the divine ſervice endeared him to Almighty God, who bleſſed his undertakings with ſucceſs, and crowned his arms with victory. For Ezechias exerted himſelf not only in repairing the ruins of his kingdom, but alſo in re-eſtabliſhing the dignity of his crown. He recovered the cities, that had been diſmembered from Judea, broke the growing power of the Philiſtines, and reſtrained them within the borders of their own narrow territories. Achaz had made himſelf and kingdom tributary to the Aſſyrians. It was an indignity, which Ezechias would not ſtoop to. Rouſed with a laudable indignation to ſee the glory of Juda thus fallen, he rallied his broken forces, ſhook off the Aſſyrian yoke, and rendered himſelf an independent monarch. Under this religious king lived the great Iſaias, his director in all his doubts, and comforter in all his pains: for he had many difficulties to ſtruggle with, and the powerful enemies, he had upon his hands, made him ſometimes diffident, and doubtful of the event. But being ſtrengthened by the counſels of that enlightened Prophet, he defeated the efforts of his adverſaries, and ſoared above the alarms of his own fears. Happy is the Prince, who diſdains not to hearken to the advice of a prudent man, and happy was Iſaias in having a king, who knew how to profit by the advice he gave him. Hence the holy Fathers made this remark,

remark, that a king, who truly fears God, will not eaſily quarrel with the true ſervants of God, and will think himſelf more happy in paying a due reſpect to the miniſters of God's holy word, than in receiving the ſervile honours of his flatterers.

§ XXXII. *The Prophet Iſaias.*

ISAIAS was deſcended of the royal race of Juda: he began to propheſy in the reign of king Azarias, which he continued to do thro' the ſucceeding reigns of Joathan, Achaz, and Ezechias; till being upwards of a hundred years old he was at laſt martyred by the impious Manaſſe. This renowned Seer for his ſingular piety, for his inimitable ſtile and divine eloquence, for his knowledge and clear inſight into futurity, ranks in the firſt place amongſt the Prophets. He ſpeaks ſo explicitly and with ſuch preciſion of Jeſus Chriſt and his Church, that he ſeems to write more like an hiſtorian penning down the account of paſt or preſent tranſactions, than a Prophet, who is foretelling the far diſtant events of ages yet to come. Amongſt the many viſions, that he had, the following is one of the moſt awful. The Almighty appeared to him in full majeſty, and, to uſe the expreſſion of ſaint John, he ſaw the glory of God ſitting upon an elevated throne, environed with a troop of melodious Seraphims, who with heavenly voices inceſſantly proclaimed the ſanctity of the Lord of Hoſts. The canticle they ſung is borrowed by the Church, and is daily chanted with ſolemnity before the Canon of her Liturgy. Awed by a reverential fear, and meaſuring his own littleneſs with the majeſty of what he beheld, Iſaias durſt not preſume to open his mouth, nor with unhallowed lips proclaim ſuch holy myſteries. The celeſtial Spirits ſaw the humble ſentiments of his heart, and one of the Seraphims, that ſtood near the throne of God, flew to him with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken up with a pair of tongs from the altar. The Angel touched the prophet's lips

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lips with the fire, and pronounced him purified from the ſtain of ſin. The Prophet upon that offered himſelf to go and announce to the people of Juda, whatever the Lord ſhould pleaſe to command. In this, as the holy Fathers remark, Iſaias inſtructs the preachers of the Goſpel, with what purity of manners and intention they ought to undertake the ſacred miniſtry, and how earneſtly they ought to pray, that God would purify their lips and hearts, and by his grace make them fit to explain his holy word to men. According to the Hebrew tradition Iſaias finiſhed his life by being ſawed in two, during the perſecution of Manaſſe. His death was precious in the ſight of God, and ſeems to be particularly ſpecified by Saint Paul in his epiſtle to the Hebrews. There ſpeaking of the virtues and ſufferings of the ancient Prophets, the Apoſtle ſays, That they patiently endured their torments, and upon the hopes of riſing to a better life joyfully reſigned the preſent, when they found it could be no longer held conſiſtently with their duty to the Lord Almighty. They ſuffered mockeries and ſtripes; they were bound in chains and impriſoned. Some were ſtoned and cut aſunder; ſome died by the ſword, whilſt others, of whom the world was not worthy, were left to wander thro' deſerts in diſtreſs, in want and miſery, loaded with afflictions, and driven into mountains, into the dens of wild beaſts and caverns of the earth.

Eccleſiaſticus before Saint Paul had alſo pronounced the panegyric of Iſaias. Ezechias, ſays the author of that book, did what was right in the eyes of God; he walked in the ways of David his progenitor under the direction of Iſaias the great and faithful Prophet. At this Prophet's word the ſun retreated backwards in its courſe, and he lengthened the king's life. Being enlightened by the great Spirit of God he ſaw into the deepeſt receſſes of futurity, and comforted thoſe who wept in Sion. He foretold what was to happen in the end of ages; he diſcloſed the moſt hidden ſecrets, and declared them long before the time. To theſe encomiums of Iſaias, and his fellow Prophets, nothing more can be added: they are the encomiums dictated by the

the Spirit of God himſelf. For Jeſus the ſon of Sirach, and Saint Paul were but the inſtruments to write, what God inſpired.

§ XXXIII. *Defeat of Sennacherib.* 4 *Kings* 19.

SENNACHERIB the king of Aſſyria being greatly exaſperated againſt Ezechias for refuſing to pay the tribute, which his father Achaz had promiſed to Salmanazar, marched a powerful army into the kingdom of Juda, took many of the fortified cities, laid a heavy tax upon the country, and obliged Ezechias to purchaſe peace at an enormous price. He drew off his troops according to the articles of agreement, but by a breach of faith ſent back Rabſaces with a ſtrong army to take poſſeſſion of Jeruſalem. Rabſaces in a ſtile the moſt imperious and inſulting ſummoned the King of Juda to ſurrender; he magnified the conqueſts made by the Aſſyrians, ſaying, what kings they had conquered, and what countries they had ſubdued; he laſtly repreſented, how raſh it would be in Ezechias to think of reſiſting the conqueror, whom no power whether human or divine was able to contend with. Ezechias rent his garments thro' grief at hearing ſuch language, put on a penitential ſack, and retired into the houſe of God to ſeek for conſolation by holy prayer. He ſent to let Iſaias know the anguiſh of his mind, and to beg the aſſiſtance of his prayers and advice againſt the evils, that threatened him. The Prophet haſtened to comfort his Prince, exhorted him to put his confidence in God, and promiſed that a ſpeedy meſſage ſhould make his enemy retire from the holy city. And in effect Rabſaces retired ſoon after to join the king of the Aſſyrians, who was employed in the ſiege of Lobna. News was there brought to Sennacherib, that Tharaca, king of Ethiopia, was upon the march with a great army to attack them, upon which he diſpatched meſſengers to Ezechias with a letter full of threats and blaſphemy to try, if he could frighten him into a ſubmiſſion. The

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holy king had recourſe to God by prayer, as before: being in the Temple he produced the threatening letter of Sennacherib, and ſpreading it before the Lord, he thus prayed aloud: Lord God of Iſrael, who ſitteſt upon the Cherubims, Thou, who alone art the God of kings and of all the earth, incline thine ear and attend: open, Lord, thine eyes, and ſee; hear what Sennacherib has ſaid. For he hath blaſphemed thy holy name. He hath indeed deſtroyed the other nations of the earth, and hath thrown their gods into the flames, for they were but graven gods, and made by the hands of men. But thou, O Lord our God, who madeſt heaven and earth, ſave us from his hand, that all the world may know, that thou art the Lord the only God. A prayer ſo ardent and ſo full of faith did not fail of its effect. Iſaias ſent to tell him, that his prayer was heard, that the Aſſyrians ſhould not enter into the city, which God had reſolved to ſave for his own, and for David his ſervant's ſake, but ſhould inglorioufly return by the way he came. Blinded to his ruin Sennacherib returned to beſiege Jeruſalem, not doubting but it muſt fall an eaſy conqueſt to his arms. But in the night an Angel went forth from the Lord, and paſſing tho' the Aſſyrian camp deſtroyed a hundred and eighty five thouſand of the army. When it was light Sennacherib ſaw the numbers of the ſlain: his pride and boaſting were at an end, he thought no more of the conqueſt of Judea, but ſtruck with terror and confuſion made the beſt of his way back to Ninive, leaving the Jews at full liberty to ſow and reap their fields, as Iſaias had promiſed them three years before. Divine vengeance purſued him even there: he began to vent his revenge upon the Iſraelites, when his two ſons unexpectedly put an end to his life a few weeks after his return, by aſſaſſinating him in the temple of his idol.

Sennacherib by the manner of his death paid the tribute due to the juſtice of the God, whoſe majeſty he had inſulted, and whoſe power he had blaſphemouſly defied. Almighty God in one night's time and by the hand of one Angel, ſwept away the collected forces of a vaſt empire

empire, and if he did not involve the king in the general ruin with his army, as he formerly did Pharaoh, it was ſays Saint Jerom, becauſe he reſerved him for the ſword of his own children. The impiety of the king againſt God was ſeverely puniſhed by the impiety of the ſons againſt their father.

§ XXXIV. *Ezechias reſtored to health.* 4 *Kings* 20.

EZECHIAS at the time, that he was ſtreightened by the army of Sennacherib, fell dangerouſly ill. Being fond of life he prayed earneſtly to God for his recovery. The Prophet Iſaias in a viſit, that he made him upon his bed of ſickneſs, admoniſhed him to ſet his houſe in order, and prepare for death. Afflicted at the doleful ſummons, the king turned himſelf round towards the wall and wept. But his lively faith made him ſtill hope in the divine goodneſs; he perſiſted ſtill to pray, and his prayer was for a longer life. The Prophet had left him, and was gone as far as the middle of the court, when he felt himſelf ſuddenly inſpired to go back and tell the king, that in conſideration of his prayers and tears the Lord had granted him a reprieve; that in three days he ſhould be able to make his appearance in the Temple, and that fifteen years more were added to his life. The king begged him to exhibit ſome viſible ſign in confirmation of theſe promiſes, upon which the Prophet wrought the celebrated miracle on the dial of king Achaz in making the ſhadow of the index go ten degrees backward from the point, it was then advanced to. The fame of Ezechias's great and virtuous actions had ſpread itſelf thro' different kingdoms. Berodach Baladan the king of Babylon, ſent him preſents and letters of congratulation upon the recovery of his health. An embaſſy from ſo great a monarch did not a little flatter the king of Juda. Pleaſed with the honour, that was done him, he took a vanity in ſhowing to the Babylonian embaſſa-

A. M. 3291. *Before J. C.* 709.

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dors his riches, the gold and ſilver veſſels, the ſhining treaſures of the Temple and royal palace. Almighty God, who beholds the inmoſt receſſes of man's heart, ſaw this vanity of the prince, and checked him for it. He ſent Iſaias to acquaint him, that ſince he was pleaſed the Babylonians ſhould ſee his treaſures, they ſhould be all carried to the city of Babylon, and that his children, as well as others of the royal race of Juda, ſhould ſerve as eunuchs in the court of Babylon. This prediction began to be verified in part very ſoon after Ezechias's death, which happened at the end of the fifteen years, that had been granted him, after a glorious and religious reign of nine and twenty years. He was ſucceeded by his ſon Manaſſes, a boy of twelve years old. This prince, unfortunately bereft of his father at an age too tender to be its own guardian, grew up in vice, and in wickedneſs ſurpaſſed the worſt of his predeceſſors. He undid all, that his father had done; he ſeduced his ſubjects into the abominations of Achab; he ſacrificed to Baal; he adored the whole hoſt of Heaven; he renewed the filthy enormities of the ancient Amorrheans, and ſet up an idol in the very Temple. By his order the ſtreets of Jeruſalem flowed with innocent blood, and amongſt the other victims of his cruel tyranny fell alſo the Prophet Iſaias, equally venerable for his ſanctity as for his grey hairs. Theſe and the like crimes provoked Almighty God to denounce againſt Jeruſalem the vengeance, which he had already executed upon Samaria, to eraſe the city, and to deliver the remnants of his people into the hands of their enemies. The Babylonians ſoon after invaded Judea. Manaſſes was defeated, taken priſoner, bound in fetters, and carried off to Babylon. The miſeries he there ſuffered, however painful in themſelves, became to him the ſpring of real happineſs. Affliction gave him underſtanding; he acknowledged the juſtice of God in his puniſhment, became a true penitent, and by his humble prayers obtained not only the pardon of his crimes, but alſo a releaſe from his impriſonment. Being reſtored to his kingdom, he endeavoured by public virtues to repair the evils, which he had cauſed by public crimes. He

reigned

reigned five and fifty years. Manasses knew, says the sacred text, and acknowledged the Lord to be truly God. He confessed his omnipotence, which sovereignly disposes of the things below; he adored his justice, which spares not even kings themselves; he experienced in fine his goodness, which hears the prayers and pardons the sins of the penitent.

§ XXXV. *Pride of Holofernes. Judith 2.*

DURING the reign of Manasses, and after his release from captivity, as seems most probable, the kingdom of Juda was invaded by a formidable army of Assyrians under the command of Holofernes. The rise and fall of empires is in the hand of God, who at certain moments raises one nation to chastise the sins of another nation, till the conquerors themselves deserve by their crimes to suffer the same vengeance in their turn, of which they had been the instruments before. The kings of Assyria were at that time permitted to extend their conquests for the punishment of those, whom they subdued. Nabuchodonosor, who is carefully to be distinguished from the king of that name, who reigned in Babylon, had formed a project of reducing the nations round to his obedience, and of making himself an universal monarch. For that purpose he raised an immense army, which he put under the command of Holofernes, with orders to conquer every kingdom in the west. Holofernes fancied, that no power upon earth would be able to stand against him. His troops like a torrent over-ran the earth; towns, provinces, and kingdoms were swept away, as he marched along; his very name struck terror into all, before he came near them; for he plundered and destroyed every thing, where the least opposition was made to his progress. Embassadors arrived from all parts to make their submission to him upon the terms, that he was pleased to prescribe; and notwithstanding the

A. M. 3388, *Before J. C.* 662

the ſervile honours they paid him, it was with the greateſt difficulty, that they were ſuffered to live after being deprived of their liberties and fortunes. The provinces of Meſopotamia, Cicilia, Syria, and Lybia, had ſubmitted to the conqueror. The trembling Jews ſaw the ſtorm coming faſt upon them: they caſt their eyes upon the holy city and the Temple, and being ſenſible that every human effort, they could make, would be inſufficient to defend them, they endeavoured by prayer and faſting to engage the God of armies in their favour. In him they hoped as their only refuge, and in him they ſolely truſted for ſucceſs in the warlike preparations they were making. Holofernes being informed of their reſolution, was enraged to think, that a people could exiſt hardy enough to oppoſe his arms. He deſired to know, who that people was, when Achior the general of the Ammonites, who was come to ſurrender himſelf to the Aſſyrians, began to recount the origin and progreſs of the Jewiſh nation; he diſcourſed of the power and majeſty of the God whom they adored, related the wonders he had wrought at ſundry times in their defence, and concluded, that every effort to ſubdue them would be ineffectual, unleſs they had forfeited the divine protection by their ſins. Holofernes thought himſelf injured by ſuch a ſpeech; he wondered how any man could imagine, that a nation unarmed and unmanned, as he ſuppoſed the Jews to be, would be able to reſiſt the great Nabuchodonoſor; he commanded Achior to be bound in chains for his bold diſcourſe, and ſent into the city of Bethulia, there to wait his doom with the inhabitants of the place. Achior related to the Bethulians, how exaſperated Holofernes was, how he had vowed their deſtruction, and what vengeance he threatened, as ſoon as he ſhould ſtorm their city. The Bethulians humbled themſelves before God, being reſolved to make the beſt defence they could; they redoubled their prayers with a holy confidence in God; and comforted Achior with the hope of ſeeing Bethulia triumph over the vain boaſts of Holofernes.

§ XXXVI.

§ XXXVI. *Fortitude of Judith.* *Judith* xi.

BETHULIA was ſituated amongſt the mountains of Galilee, a city ſtrongly fortified both by art & nature. Holofernes at the head of an army, conſiſting of a hundred and twenty thouſand foot and twenty two thouſand horſe, advanced to beſiege it. The vaſt ſuperiority of his numbers was enough to damp the moſt intrepid reſolution of men, who had truſted in any other, than the divine power. The Bethulians took up their weapons with a ſtrong reliance on the Lord of hoſts, and defended themſelves with ſurpriſing vigour, till Holofernes cut off the conduit, and poſſeſſed himſelf of the ſprings, that ſupplied the town with water. Their courage then ſunk, and their former reſolution failed them. Nothing but murmurs and cries of deſpondency were heard in every quarter; their ciſterns were dry, no ſuccour was expected; finding themſelves in diſtreſs, they caſt the whole blame upon their chiefs for not having made their peace at firſt with Holofernes, and declared aloud, that it was better to die at once by the ſword, than to drag out life by a lingering death. Ozias, who commanded in the town, did and ſaid all he could to conſole and rouſe them: they were not inclined to hear him, and tumultuouſly inſiſted upon his ſurrendering the city immediately to the enemy; and it was but by his tears and intreaties, that he prevailed upon them to wait five days longer, promiſing to comply with their requeſt, if within that time no ſuccour ſhould appear. Then it was, that Judith began to ſhow herſelf. Judith was a widow woman of more than ordinary virtue: from the time of her huſband's death ſhe had bid adieu to the finery of dreſs, and tho' poſſeſſed of a plentiful fortune and pleaſing beauty, had conſecrated the remainder of her days to devotion and penance. In the preſent diſtreſs of her country ſhe felt herſelf puſhed on by a ſecret impulſe to make ſome generous effort for the common good. She reſolved upon an enterprize the moſt hazardous and ſingular;

A. M. 3338. *Before J. C.* 669.

gular; it could only be ſuggeſted by that divine Spirit, which inſpired her with a fortitude equal to the danger: it was to viſit Holofernes in his tent. She ſent to the ancients Chabri and Charmi to come to her houſe, and having reproached them for their deſpondency in pretending to preſcribe a time for the divine mercy, ſhe told them, that ſhe had formed a plan for their delivery, and begged their prayers for its ſucceſs. She mentioned not what her intention was, and diſmiſſed them. As ſoon as they were gone, ſhe ſhut herſelf up in her oratory, proſtrated herſelf upon the ground, and by fervent prayer implored the divine bleſſing. She roſe up full of confidence, put off her widow's weeds and clothes of penance, and adorned herſelf with all the graces, that the richneſs and ornaments of dreſs could give. The purity of her intention ſanctified the action, and God himſelf, ſays the ſacred text, added to her beauty. Being attended by her maid, to whom ſhe gave a bottle of wine and bread for their proviſion, Judith went praying along the ſtreet, till ſhe came to the town-gate, where Ozias and the ancients were waiting to give her their bleſſing, and wiſh ſucceſs to her undertaking. She paſſed thro' the gates, and haſtened down the hill towards the Aſſyrian camp about break of day, when the advanced guard perceived her coming. Being ſtruck at her incomparable beauty, they took and conducted her to the tent of Holofernes their general. Holofernes was captivated at the very ſight of her charms, bade her not fear, and aſked the motive of her coming. She replied, that it was to fly from a city, which ſhe ſaw was upon the brink of ruin, becauſe its inhabitants by their crimes had provoked the wrath of God, and were therefore abandoned to the ſword of their enemies. Holofernes interpreted Judith's words according to the pride of his own heart, and admired her wiſdom, in which ſhe ſeemed to excell as much as in beauty: he allotted her a ſeparate tent, and gave orders, that ſhe ſhould be reſpectfully ſupplied with every thing ſhe wanted, and be at liberty to go in and out, when and as often as ſhe pleaſed. She returned his courteſies with thanks, excuſed herſelf from eating of the

meats

meats he offered her, saying, that she had brought her own little provision with her, and could eat of nothing but what was allowed her by the law she professed. Thus unawed by human respects, and unshaken by fear, Judith in the midst of danger, and in the camp of her enemies, forgot not her duty to God, nor her obedience to his holy law.

§ XXXVII. *Triumph of Judith.* *Judith* 13.

JUDITH made use of the liberty she had received from Holofernes, of going in and out of her tent, to adore her God: she went forth every night into the vale of Bethulia, bathed in the fountain, and returned praying to the Lord God of Israel, that he would direct her steps for the delivery of his people. On the fourth day Holofernes appointed his chief officers to sup with him, and sent an invitation to Judith, that she would consent not only to eat and drink in joyfulness, but also to dwell with him; for he was deeply enamoured with her beauty. Judith being in hopes, that it might give her an opportunity of accomplishing the design she had in view for the good of her country, did not reject the proposal, but decked herself out to advantage, and repaired to the general's tent. The general was unusually gay on the occasion, and drank more plentifully than ever he had done before. When it was grown late, the officers retired, and left Holofernes and Judith in the tent together. Oppressed with sleep and wine he lay upon his bed; she rose up, and standing before the bed for some time prayed to God in silence; with tears in her eyes she conjured him to strengthen her arm, and to second her endeavours in the service of her country. Armed with fortitude above her sex, she advanced to the bed's head; there hung the cimeter of Holofernes: she took it down, she drew it out of the scabbard, then lifting up her eyes to Heaven, she twisted her hand in his hair, and at two strokes severed his head from the body. She wrapped

A. M. 3338, *Before J. C.* 662.

up

up the head in his own rich canopy, and having taken some time to recover herself from the agitation she was in, went out and gave it to her maid, who was waiting at the door of the pavilion. They then walked off together, as they had done the three foregoing nights, and unsuspectedly passing thro' the guards, directed their steps towards the vale of Bethulia. When they came to the town-gate, Judith called upon the watch to let them in. Judith's voice was no sooner heard, than the ancients were called, and the whole city was in motion to receive her. By the light of torches they conducted her to a high place in the town, where silence being proclaimed, she began to harangue and exhort them to return thanks to God for the protection he had given them by her arm, producing to public view the trophy of her victory, the head of Holofernes; a horrid spectacle to the eyes of humanity, but of joy and triumph to the citizens of Bethulia. Ozias and the ancients vied with each other in the praises of a woman, who had thus saved their lives and liberties at the peril of her own. Achior was desired to approach, and to view the head of the tyrant, who in contempt of the God of Israel had proudly devoted him and the Bethulians to a cruel death. Achior threw himself at the feet of Judith, professed his belief in the God, whom she adored, and declared himself a Jew. Judith having thus acted her part, gave the citizens notice, that they must now act theirs, and be ready to sally forth at sun-rise upon the enemy, with as much noise and clamour, as they could. The Assyrians were alarmed with that unusual vigour of the besieged, who had hitherto kept themselves close within their walls; they ran to awake their general, and found the mangled trunk of a man weltering in his blood without a head. There was nothing to be seen but confusion, nothing heard but yells of despair throughout the camp; being under no command, the Assyrians began to fly different ways, as their frights and feats dispersed them. The Hebrews pursued them with incredible slaughter, and notice being given to the neighbouring towns, the whole country was immediately in arms to demolish the flying

enemy.

enemy. An immenſe ſpoil was ſhared amongſt the conquerors, and public rejoicings for the glorious victory were continued for three months. Joachim the High-prieſt, with all his ancients, went from Jeruſalem to Bethulia to ſee and honour the woman, whom they ſtiled the glory of Jeruſalem, the joy of Iſrael, and honour of her people. Far from being elated by the encomiums they gave her, Judith remained as humble in her own eyes, as ſhe was great in theirs: in a ſublime canticle ſhe proclaimed the praiſes of God, who had given her victory, and to whom ſhe gave the glory. She retired back to her domeſtic oratory, made her ſervant free, reſumed her private practices of prayer and holy faſting, and never after paſſed the threſhold of her door, but on the ſolemn feſtivals of the year, when ſhe appeared abroad with great glory.

Admirable is this hiſtory of Judith in all its circumſtances. By an event, which ſurpaſſes whatever fabulous hiſtorians have invented to diſplay the courage of their heros, we ſee that God is the protector of thoſe, who fear him, and that invincible are they, who know how to put their truſt in him. A ſingle woman, by her unparalleled fortitude, defeated one of the moſt formidable armies, that were ever ſet on foot; ſhe alone preſerved Bethulia, and reſcued the whole country from deſtruction. But what makes Judith ſtill more worthy of our admiration is, the victory ſhe gained over herſelf. To prayer and faſting ſhe joined the virtue of chaſtity all the days of her widowhood; and when the victory, ſhe had gained over Holofernes, had ſet her up as the object of public commendation, ſhe haſtened back within the walls of her private oratory, as tho' ſhe were a ſtranger to her own merit, and humbly retreated from the face of her fellow citizens, as tho' ſhe had done nothing to deſerve their praiſe.

§ XXXVIII.

§ XXXVIII. *Piety of king Josias. 4 Kings 22.*

A. M. 3374, *Before J. C.* 626. KING Manasses was succeeded by his son Amon, who imitating the impiety, but not the repentance of his father, died by the hands of his own servants, after a miserable reign of two years. The untimely death of Amon vacated the throne for his son, the celebrated Josias, whose name the Prophet had for ages before announced to the world. This prince was inclined to deeds of goodness from his earliest years, nor to his latest breath did he ever deviate from the path, he had taken. As soon as he was of an age capable of acting for himself, for at his father's death he was but eight years old, he began by exterminating the idols of Baal, which had been set up in the country. His zeal was not confined within the bounds of his own kingdom; he extended it to a great part of the territories, that had been once possessed by the unhappy Israelites, and endeavoured to establish the true religion amongst those idolatrous inhabitants, who had succeeded to their possessions. Many altars and prophane groves had been left still standing in the principal towns of Manasses, Ephraim, Simeon, and Nephthali: he destroyed them all, broke the idols into pieces, and strewed the fragments upon the tombs of those, who had immolated to them: he dug up the bones of those devoted priests, who had once sacrificed to the calves of Jeroboam, and burnt them upon the altar at Bethel. When he had done this, he set about repairing the Temple, which by profanation and neglect had fallen greatly to decay. Then it was, that Helcias the High-priest, in examining into things himself, found the book of Deuteronomy, written by the hand of Moyses, which he delivered to Saphan the scribe, who carried it to the king. It was read aloud, and upon hearing the dreadful threats, that God there utters against those, who shall depart from his holy law, Josias rent his garments, and commanded Helcias to go and consult the Lord for him and the remnant of Israel and Juda, concerning the evils,

evils, with which they were threatened in the book, that was found. There lived at that time in Jeruſalem a holy woman, called Holda, and noted for the ſpirit of prophecy. Helcias, in obedience to the king's command, went to conſult her, and received for anſwer, that the threats contained in the ſacred volume ſhould with the utmoſt rigour be executed upon Jeruſalem and the ſinful inhabitants thereof: but becauſe the king of Juda had been moved with the fear of God, and had humbled himſelf by penance and true contrition of heart, that the weight of God's wrath ſhould not fall upon that place, till after he was peaceably depoſited with his anceſtors in the tomb. Upon the report of that anſwer, Joſias called the ancients of Juda and Jeruſalem together in the Temple, and read to them the book of Deuteronomy from the beginning to the end. When he had done, he made a ſolemn covenant with Almighty God, and engaged himſelf to perform the things, that were written in the book, which he had read. Standing up in his tribunal before the whole multitude, he promiſed from his heart to obſerve all the divine precepts, and by his preſſing exhortations perſuaded his ſubjects to make the ſame promiſe. The exhortations and example of that good king had ſuch an effect upon the people, that they ſwerved not from their duty, as long as he lived, and unfortunate was it for his kingdom, that he was not bleſſed with a longer life; going out unadviſedly to battle againſt Nechao the king of Egypt, he received a wound, of which he died, after a godly reign of one and thirty years.

Almighty God haſtened to draw this religious prince out of the midſt of iniquity, ſays Saint Ambroſe, that he might not behold the calamities, which were going to be poured down upon the kingdom of Juda. Joſias had exerted the moſt active zeal, not only to aboliſh the remains of idolatry, but alſo to renew the exerciſe of true religion thro' his dominions; he celebrated the feaſt of the Paſſover with a ſolemnity unknown to any of his predeceſſors: by his exemplary piety he teaches kings, and perſons in authority, that their firſt duty is to God;

that while they expect to be obeyed themſelves, they muſt ſee to have a due obedience paid to God, and that both by word and example they muſt enforce at leaſt the ſame reſpect for the divine commands, as they do for their own. To the humble docility, with which he liſtened to the book of Deuteronomy, the Scripture attributes the felicity of this prince. The ſame diſpoſition of an humble, docile heart, ought we to carry with us, as often as we go to hear, or ſit ourſelves down to read the word of God; a diſpoſition to learn and practiſe what it teaches.

§ XXXIX. *Siege of Jeruſalem.* 4 *Kings* 25.

JUDEA, being deprived of her laſt good king, mourned as for the loſs of a common parent. The wicked conduct of Joachaz, the ſon and ſucceſſor of Joſias, made all good men more ſenſible of their loſs. This prince, who had no pretenſions to the crown by birth, gained it by favour of the people, and at the end of three months loſt it by the hand of Nechao king of Egypt. For Nechao in his return from the war, which he had undertaken againſt the Aſſyrians, coming to Jeruſalem depoſed the miſerable Joachaz, whom he carried with him in chains into Egypt, and appointed his elder brother Eliacim to reign in his place. Eliacim, better known by the name of Joakim reigned eleven years, and tho' he had the advantage of many living Prophets to point out the path of virtue, he nevertheleſs plunged into the depth of wickedneſs. The prophecy of Jeremiah being read to him, he cut it into pieces with a penknife and threw it by ſcraps into the fire, on account of the threats it contained againſt him. The Spirit of God commanded Jeremiah to pen down the ſame prophecy in another volume, and to add ſtill new threats to the former. Threats had no effect upon the heart of a hardened ſinner; the meaſure of Juda's crimes was completed, the chief prieſts and people plunged into the moſt ſhameful abominations of the Gentiles,

A. M. 3398, *Before J. C.* 602.

tiles, they polluted the houſe of God, and ſcorned every meſſenger, that was ſent to remind them of their duty. The long-injured mercy of Almighty God, calling them to repentance, was then turned into juſtice, and Babylon was the ſcourge appointed by God to reduce the inhabitants of Juda to the ſtate, to which Ninive had reduced thoſe of Iſrael. Nabuchodonoſor with a powerful army laid ſiege to Jeruſalem, which he took by capitulation, made Joakim his priſoner, bound him with chains and carried him with Daniel and other noble youths and part of the ſacred veſſels to Babylon. This happened in the year of the world 3398, and from that year is dated the firſt of the ſeventy years captivity, that the Jews endured in the country of Chaldea. Joakim ſeems to have recovered his liberty again, upon his promiſe of paying true allegiance and a yearly tribute to the Babylonian monarch. But breaking his oath by an open revolt at the end of three years, he again fell into the hands of the Chaldeans, from whom he received the juſt puniſhment of his crimes by a violent and diſgraceful death. Joachin, alias Jechonias, his wicked ſon, ſucceeded him for three months, when Nabuchodonoſor ſnatched him from the throne, and carried him bound in chains away to Babylon. His mother, his wives, his children and chief nobles of the kingdom were ſharers with him in his captivity: the treaſures alſo of the Temple, and the golden veſſels, which Salomon had finiſhed with ſo much art and magnificence, were at the ſame time tranſported to Babylon. In Judea little more remained beſides the ſhadow of a kingdom, and ſome ſad remains of its former grandeur. A merciful God ſeemed unwilling to inflict the laſt ſtroke upon his choſen people, he permitted their power to ſink by degrees, that the ſight of preſent calamities, and the gradual approach of greater evils might awaken them to repentance. Sedecias the uncle of Joachin and ſon of Joſias was inveſted with the title, and appearance of king under Nabuchodonoſor. He was a worthleſs prince, averſe to every thing, that was good, deaf to the exhortations of Jeremiah, and buried in vice. The body of the people imitated the example of their prince,

prince, they defiled the land with pagan crimes, they inſulted the prophets and laughed at the divine threats. Sedecias in the ninth year of his reign revolted againſt the king of Babylon, and his revolt brought on the puniſhment due to his other crimes. Nabuchodonoſor led a formidable army againſt him, and blocked him up in the city of Jeruſalem. Tho' beſet with the terrors of war without, and pinched with the miſeries of famine within, the beſieged vigorouſly defended themſelves for two years. A wide breach was at laſt made in the wall, and the town carried by aſſault: the wretched Jews had nothing to truſt to but flight and the victor's clemency. Sedecias eſcaped by night, and fled towards Jericho. But being overtaken and brought back, he was preſented to Nabuchodonoſor, who executed ſevere vengeance upon him. Having ordered his ſons to be maſſacred before his face, he plucked out his eyes, loaded him with irons, and carried him away captive to Babylon. Nabuchodonoſor having thus taken not ſo much his own, as the Almighty's revenge upon a ſtiffnecked people, returned in triumph to his own country, leaving Nabuzardan his general to complete the ruin of Judea. His orders were to throw down the walls of Jeruſalem, to demoliſh the Temple, the royal palace, and the reſt of the houſes, to ſtrip the inhabitants of every valuable effect they had, and tranſport them to Babylon, ſo that none ſhould remain except the poor huſbandmen, who were neceſſary to cultivate the vineyards and plough the land.

Such was the diſmal ſtate, to which Jeruſalem was reduced in puniſhment of her ſins. Such was the fall of that once happy city, and with ſuch energy of expreſſion is her devaſtation deſcribed by Jeremiah in his Lamentations, that one muſt have loſt the ſenſe of feeling not to ſympathize with the Prophet in his grief. Holy is our grief, and ſalutary is our affliction, ſays Saint Auſtin, when to a ſincere deteſtation of ſin we join our tears of compaſſion for the ſuffering ſinner.

§ XL.

§ XL. *Deſtruction of the kingdom of Juda.* 4 *Kings* 25.

NABUZARDAN executed the orders of his royal maſter with a ſevere hand. The deſtruction of every thing both great and ſacred in Jeruſalem was completed; amongſt the miſerable inhabitants, that were collected for their tranſmigration into the country of Babylon, was the Prophet Jeremiah. Nabuchodonoſor, out of reſpect to his eminent ſanctity, had given ſpecial orders about him. Nabuzardan had alſo a great reverence for the holy man, and left it to his choice either to accompany the captives, or remain in his own country. Compaſſion for the diſtreſſed huſbandmen, who were left without help or counſel, determined the Prophet to chuſe the latter. But his preſence was of little ſervice to men, who were too headſtrong to profit by advice. The appointment of Godolias to be their governour excited their jealouſy; they refuſed to ſubmit to his authority; they roſe up, and murdered him and his attendants in the town of Maſphat. When they had committed the raſh action, they began to conſider and to dread the conſequences; they reflected, that Godolias had been appointed by Nabuchodonoſor, and that the murder, they were guilty of, would be looked upon as a treaſonable inſult againſt the royal authority. The fear of puniſhment made them unanimouſly reſolve to abandon the country, and fly into Egypt. Jeremiah endeavoured to calm their fears, and to diſſuade them from their purpoſe, promiſing that, if they ſtaid, no harm would befall them, but if they went, that they ſhould every one of them periſh in a land, which like their own, was already deſtined to deſtruction. Notwithſtanding that, they ſtill perſiſted in their firſt reſolution; their fears of the Chaldeans made them deaf to reaſon, and they unfortunately concluded, that there was no other way to preſerve their lives, than by retreating into Egypt. *A. M.* 3417, *Before J. C.* 588.

Thus was Judea abandoned by the remaining part of its natives, and reduced to a loneſome deſert; thus was the

the plummet of the houſe of Achab, & the cord of Samaria ſtretched out upon Jeruſalem, as the Lord had long threatened; thus was the kingdom of Juda blotted out, and the degenerate Hebrews driven from the land, which had been given to their forefathers, as an inheritance for ever, if they had remained faithful to the Lord their God. Jeremiah had uſed his endeavours to make the people ſenſible of their crimes, and exhorted them to avert the ſtroke of divine vengeance by a timely repentance. Being actuated with true zeal, he ſought their ſalvation, not their praiſe; he flattered not their ſins, he ſpoke not what might pleaſe, but what he thought might inſtruct and rouſe them: and when he found, that neither his repreſentations nor his exhortations had any effect upon men, who were running headlong into ruin, he admoniſhed them to be upon the watch againſt the corruptions of Babylon, leſt in the midſt of idolatres, they might forget the religion of their anceſtors, and adopt the ſuperſtitions of the Gentiles.

§ XLI. *The Prophet Jeremiah. Jer. 38.*

A. M. 3420, *Before J. C.* 580. JEREMIAH not being able to perſuade that miſerable remnant of the Jews, whom Nabuchodonoſor had ſpared, to remain in their own country, was forced to accompany them into Egypt, where, according to the Hebrew tradition, he fell a martyr to their reſentment for having reprehended them for their idolatry. Jeremiah was of the ſacerdotal race, and noted amongſt his cotemporaries for great holineſs of life. Being ſanctified from his mother's womb, he was in the early years of youth called to the miniſtry of God's word, and began to preach by the time he had attained the fifteenth year of his age. He was favoured with many revelations relative to the future misfortunes of the Jews. In his ſtile and manner of expreſſion he is of all the Prophets the moſt pathetic, as appears from his Lamentations. He ſaw the holy city of Jeruſalem over-run with vices, which

which he knew would end in the ruin of his country, and therefore never ceaſed to admoniſh his fellow citizens of the impending calamities, which God in his anger had prepared for the puniſhment of an impenitent people. His zeal diſpleaſed the wicked, and excited the animoſity of the great. Jeremiah ſaw the ſtorm of perſecution gathering round him; he ſaw his enemies prepared to take away his life, but was not daunted; he heard their threats, but did not ſhrink from his duty; being ready to ſeal with his blood the truths he uttered, the violence of his perſecutors made him more animated and vigorous in his public diſcourſes. The wicked princes of the people would hear him no longer; they applied to Sedecias for leave to throw him into a ciſtern of deep mud. The king, tho' an admirer of the holy Prophet, weakly yielded to their requeſt, which was immediately put into execution, and Jeremiah muſt in a ſhort time have been ſtifled, if the king had not, upon the repreſentation of one of his officers, quickly ordered him to be taken out.

Saint Jerom ſeems to wonder how a man, alone and unſupported, as Jeremiah was, could ſtand againſt ſo many powerful adverſaries: the holy Doctor then corrects his ſurpriſe, dives into the cauſe of that wonderful effect of the Prophet's fortitude, and aſcribes it not to the abilities of man, but to the omnipotence of God. For in the very firſt page of Jeremiah's book we find, that God had promiſed to endue him with ſuch reſolution and fortitude of mind, as ſhould enable him to ſtand unſhaken, like a column of iron or a wall of braſs, againſt the attacks, that ſhould be made againſt him. He was aſſured of the divine protection, and from thence aroſe his force and confidence. From the ſame ſource alſo ſprings that magnanimity and undaunted courage, which we ſo deſervedly admire in the martyrs and other ſaints of God. In this ſenſe, Saint Cyprian ſays, that a man of God, that is, a man, who with truth upon his lips has the love of God in his heart, and the fear of God before his eyes, defies the keeneſt rage of human malice; ſuch a man may be deprived of life, he cannot be overcome.

§ XLII. *The prophet Baruch. Bar. 2.*

A. M. 8420, *Before J. C.* 580. THE Prophet Baruch, however diſtinguiſhed for his noble birth, was more illuſtrious for his piety. Drawn by the love of virtue, he bade adieu to every worldly advantage, to become the diſciple of Jeremiah, whoſe ſecretary he was, and inſeparable companion in his labours. He was the faithful interpreter of his maſter's will, and delivered the divine mandates to a ſinful nation with a magnanimity equal to that, which we ſo much admire in the conduct and writings of Jeremias himſelf. In the painful hardſhips, which that holy Prophet had to undergo, either in the diſcharge of his miniſtry, or from the malice of his enemies, Baruch never left him, being always ready to ſhare in his ſufferings and to help him by his ſervices, as far as he was able. Amidſt the heavy trials, which in the old law were a figure of thoſe heavier labours, that the miniſters of the Goſpel were to undergo in the new, he movingly expreſſes, how his mind was affected at the evils, which he either ſaw in others, or experienced in himſelf. Alas! unhappy man as I am, ſays he in the depth of his affliction, why does the Lord thus ſend me grief upon grief? I paſs all the days of my life in groans, and my growing ſorrows leave me no repoſe. Such were the complaints of a man labouring under the load of adverſity. Many of the ſufferings, which he had to bear, and which made the ſubject of his complaints, were the conſequence of his attachment to Jeremiah. The perſecutions, that were raiſed againſt the one, fell likewiſe upon the other: but nothing could ever make him break off that connection, or depart from his venerable maſter, as long as he lived. He remained his faithful attendant in life, and became the zealous imitator of his virtues after death. He ſucceeded him in inſtructing and exhorting the people to their duty; his diſcourſes breathe the ſame ardent zeal, but are tempered with expreſſions of profound humility. Behold the manner, in which he addreſſes himſelf to Almighty God:

Hear,

Hear, Lord, our humble prayers, and put an end to our captivity for thy own ſake: draw us from the depth of our afflictions, that the world may know, thou art the Lord our God. From thy holy habitation, O Lord, caſt down thine eyes of pity on us; vouchſafe only to incline thy ear, and graciouſly to hear us. Open thine eyes, and ſee: for the dead, who are ſhut up within the tomb, and whoſe ſouls are ſevered from their bodies, ſhall render neither honour nor glory to thy name. It is the living, who bend beneath the weight of thy chaſtiſements, who humble themſelves in faſting and in mourning, whoſe eyes are grown dim with weeping, and whoſe hearts are rent with ſorrow, that ſhall give glory to thee, O Lord, and make thy juſtice be revered. Hence to all Chriſtians, who are the diſciples not of Prophets only, but of a crucified God, it is obvious to conclude, that in their ſufferings they muſt be humble, as well as patient: for if patience be the perfection of charity, humility is the ſanctification of patience, which is the ſupport and preſervative of every other virtue.

§ XLIII. *The twelve minor Prophets.*

ISAIAH and Jeremiah, with Ezechiel and Daniel, are called the greater Prophets; but why they are ſo called, no other reaſon can ſeemingly be given, than that they are more diffuſe and voluminous in their prophecies than others. For all prophecy is equally from God, and whether it be long or ſhort, it always is a ſupernatural gift of the Holy Ghoſt. Beſides the four we have mentioned, there are twelve others, who being not ſo extenſive in their writings, are commonly called the minor Prophets. The time, in which they flouriſhed, includes from the firſt to the laſt, about four hundred years: for they lived not all at once, but were ſent at different periods by a merciful providence to oppoſe the torrent of impiety, and to rouſe the faith of an offending people. Baruch is not ranked by name in either claſs; for the prophecy, which now bears his name, was for a long

time thought to have been the work of Jeremiah, and in effect is yet believed to have been moſtly dictated by him, tho' penned by Baruch after his death.

In the order of time, the firſt of the minor Prophets ſeems to have been Jonas, of whom mention has been made above, and he began to propheſy, when he was very young. For he foretold the conqueſts, which Jeroboam the ſecond, king of Iſrael, was to make againſt the Syrians, by reſtoring the borders of Iſrael from Emath to the ſea. This was under the reign of Amaſias, king of Juda, about 823 years before Chriſt. This prophet's miſſion to the city of Ninive was of a later date.

Oſee propheſied under Ozias, Joathan, Achaz, and Ezechias, kings of Juda, and continued preaching for near a century, having begun about 815 years before Chriſt.

Amos propheſied in the twenty fifth of Ozias, king of Juda, about 780 years before Chriſt.

Abdias, tho' he has made no mention of the time, in which he lived, ſeems to follow cloſe upon the two laſt mentioned prophets.

Micheas propheſied in the reign of Joathan, king of Juda, and expreſsly ſpecified Bethlehem for the place of our bleſſed Saviour's birth, 750 years before the time.

Nahum propheſied after the ten tribes were carried into captivity, and foretold the deſtruction of Ninive. He lived under Ezechias, king of Juda, about 713 years before Chriſt.

Joel, altho' it be not ſpecified in what reign he preached, ſeems to have lived under king Manaſſes, king of Juda, and foretells the great evils, that were coming upon the people for their ſins, about 689 years before Chriſt.

Sophonias lived in the reign of Joſias, ſon of Amon, and pronounces a woe upon the ſinful city of Jeruſalem, about 630 years before Chriſt.

Habacuc was cotemporary with the Prophets Jeremias and Daniel, foretold the invaſion of the Chaldeans againſt Judea, and lived to ſee his propheſy fulfilled 600 years before Chriſt.

Aggeus

Aggeus propheſied 520 before Chriſt, and was zealous in encouraging the Jews to rebuild the Temple after their return from Babylon.

Zacharias lived at the ſame time with Aggeus, that is, a little after the Babylonian captivity. He ſpeaks very clearly of Jeſus Chriſt, of the converſion of the Gentiles, and the flouriſhing ſtate of Chriſt's Church.

Malachias propheſied after the Temple was rebuilt, and is the laſt of the Prophets. For from his time no Prophet appeared, till John the Baptiſt, according to his prediction, roſe from the deſert to prepare the way for the great Meſſias.

All theſe holy Prophets, as is evinced by their writings, were animated with the ſame ſpirit, and with the ſame energy inveighed againſt the wickedneſs of their times. In the moſt explicit and deciſive terms they ſpeak of the promiſed Meſſias, the Father of the future age, and Saviour of the world. And the Meſſias, who by the mouth of theſe Prophets thus announced himſelf to the world ſo long beforehand, has convinced mankind, that he had a ſelf-exiſtent Being, before he took fleſh and dwelt amongſt us, and that the time, at which he choſe to become Man, was fixed by his own free will. For propheſy, according to the Scripture itſelf, is one of the moſt convincing proofs we have of the Divinity. It can belong to none but God to comprehend the boundleſs extent of ages, and in his eternity to behold the future, as intimately preſent to him as the paſt. Therefore one of the holy Prophets in inſulting the idols of the Gentiles confidently ſaid, Tell us the ſecrets of futurity, and we will ſay, you are Gods.

§ XLIV. *The prophet Ezechiel.* *Ezec.* 1.

EZECHIEL, the ſon of Buzi, of the prieſtly race, was inſpired by Almighty God, in the country of Babylon, to inſtruct and comfort his fellow captives by his prophetic viſions, which are conveyed in a ſtile equally myſterious *A. M.* 3410, *Before J. C.* 590.

myſterious and ſublime. In the fifth year of the captivity of king Joachin, with whom he had been led away out of Judea, eleven years before the total deſtruction of Jeruſalem under Sedecias, being upon the bank of the great river Chobar or Euphrates, he perceived a whirlwind riſing from the north, and a great cloud fraught with fire, which enlightened the atmoſphere around. In the midſt of the fiery cloud appeared four living creatures, who in ſhape and body had the likeneſs of a human figure; but their head and feet were of a very ſingular appearance. For each one had four faces in an oppoſite direction looking towards the four points of the heavens; the face of a man was on the fore part of all the four, the face of a lion on the right, on the left was the face of an ox, and behind was the face of an eagle raiſed ſomewhat higher. They had four wings, one on every ſide, and under each wing a hand, reſembling that of a man; their legs were ſtreight, and the ſole of their feet was like that of a calf. Two of their wings covered each one's body, and the other two were extended and lifted up, as it were ready for flight. Whenever they moved, and they moved as the impulſe of the Spirit directed them, their motion was ſtreight forward, and they ran and returned like flaſhes of lightning, neither did they turn about, when they went, each one having his face always pointing forward. Their whole figure glowed with the appearance of burning coals, and of bright-flaming lamps. By the ſide of each Cherubim, for the Prophet tells us, that he knew them to be Cherubims, ſtood a wheel with four faces, of an immenſe ſize and dreadful appearance, ſhining like the chryſolite ſtone, and having their circles full of eyes. Each of the four wheels was a compound figure of two wheels ſet acroſs one another, and ſo formed as to run with equal volubility towards any one of the four points of the world without the neceſſity of turning. For the ſame divine Spirit, which actuated the living creatures, alſo actuated the wheels, and they all ſtood ſtill, or moved on in the ſame proportion and velocity together, as the Spirit of life impelled them, forming as it were a magnificent chariot, in which the Almighty rode. For over the heads of the living creatures

was

was expanded the likeneſs of the firmament reſembling cryſtal, and above the firmament a throne, ſhining like the ſapphire-ſtone, and on the throne was the appearance of a man, glowing like reſplendent braſs from his loins upwards, and from his loins downwards like ſhining fire. At the ſight of this awful viſion Ezechiel fell upon his face: the Lord bade him riſe, and announce his judgments to the children of Iſrael. The Prophet roſe in obedience to the divine command, and remained ſeven days in affliction with his people, when the Lord ordered him to go into the plain, where he ſhowed him the ſame myſterious viſion a ſecond time. The term fixed for the total ruin of Jeruſalem was in the interim haſtening on: the remaining part of its inhabitants plunged into freſh crimes, and their hearts were hardened in iniquity. In the ſixth year of king Joachin's captivity, Ezechiel ſaw the glory of the Lord a third time, being raviſhed in ſpirit to Jeruſalem. The four living creatures and the wheels were exhibited to him in the ſame manner, as he had ſeen them upon the banks of the Euphrates. He moreover ſaw ſix champions in armour, advancing to deſtroy the ſinful city, and beſides them a man, clothed in linnen, whom the Lord commanded to take of the burning coals, which were in the midſt of the wheels between the Cherubims, and to pour them out upon Jeruſalem. After that the Cherubims lifted up their wings, and the wheels with them, and the glory of the Lord departed from the midſt of the city, and reſted upon the mountain of Olives. The Prophet ſaw it no longer, and was reſtored in ſpirit to the land of Chaldea.

The images, which are exhibited in this viſion to Ezechiel, ſeem calculated to impreſs upon the minds of the Jewiſh people a lively and reſpectful idea of the majeſty of God, whom they had been uſed to conſider, as ſitting upon the Cherubims. To ſtrike with awe, and to deter them from ſin, the Prophet deſcribed the Lord as coming forth to chaſtiſe them in his wrath, which was repreſented by the whirlwind and fiery cloud ariſing from the north: for Babylon, from whence the Almighty poured vengeance upon his faithleſs people, lay to the north of Jeruſalem.

§ XLV

§ XLV. *Ezechiel's viſion of bones. Ezec.* 37.

A. M. 3417, *Before J. C.* 583. EZECHIEL was inſpired, as has been ſeen, to declare the ſevere judgments of Almighty God to the impenitent Iſraelites in the figurative language of ſublime propheſy. The viſions, in which he ſaw the heavy chaſtiſements prepared by an injured Deity not only againſt the Jewiſh nation at that time, but alſo againſt a ſinful world in the latter days, are myſterious and alarming. He was likewiſe favoured with other viſions, which were calculated to inſtil comfort into the afflicted, and to exhibit the pleaſing effects of the divine goodneſs to a repenting people. In the twentyfifth year of his captivity he was tranſported in ſpirit to one of the high mountains in Judea, where he ſaw the temple of Jeruſalem reſtored to its ancient ſplendor, and the glory of the God of Iſrael entering into it again by the ſame eaſtern gate, through which he had ſeen it depart, according to the appearance, which had been ſhown him twenty years before in the viſion of wheels and Cherubims near the river Chobar. The re-eſtabliſhment of the Jewiſh nation had ſome years before been diſplayed to him in his extraordinary viſion of the bones. He was taken up by the Spirit of God, and ſet down in the midſt of a plain, which was ſcattered over on every ſide with a prodigious number of dry bones. After he had been led round, and had ſurveyed the horrid ſpectacle at leiſure, the Lord commanded him to bid thoſe bones unite again, and reſume their former ſtate. The Prophet ſpoke, as he was commanded in the name of God, by whom all things live, and to whom nothing is difficult. He commanded the dry bones to hear him, and as he propheſied, behold a great commotion with a ruſtling noiſe began amongſt them: bones approached to bones, each one fixing itſelf in its reſpective ſocket; the nerves and muſcles were ſtretched out upon them, fleſh grew over, and they were clothed with ſkin, ſo that nothing but life was wanting to renew and perfect their former being. O ſon of man, ſaid the Lord God

God to Ezechiel, bid the Spirit come from the four winds, and blow upon the dead, that they may live again. Ezechiel ſpoke, and at his word the Spirit came into them, and they lived, and they ſtood upon their feet an exceeding great army. Almighty God was then pleaſed to explain the viſion to his Prophet, and informed him, that the bones were the houſe of Iſrael, who upon the deſtruction of their city thought their hopes were loſt, and their exiſtence entirely cut off: but that he would open their graves, that he would raiſe and bring them back into the land of Iſrael, where they and their children's children ſhall dwell; that his ſervant David ſhould be their prince for ever, that his tabernacle ſhould be with them, that he would be their God, and they ſhould be his people; that the nations in fine ſhould know, He was the Lord, the ſanctifier of Iſrael, when his ſanctuary ſhould be in the midſt of them for ever.

Thus did Almighty God conſole his people in their diſtreſs, thus did he aſſure them of his pardon upon their repentance, and thus did he promiſe to lead them back out of their captivity, and reſtore them to their country, as it effectually came to paſs ſome years after under the conduct of Zorobabel. This conſolatory promiſe of Almighty God was not confined to the bare re-eſtabliſhment of the Jewiſh people in the land of Iſrael, it included alſo thoſe greater bleſſings, which were to extend to all nations throughout the world, by the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian Church. Founded in a covenant of peace between God and his people, and cleanſed from ſin in the blood of Jeſus Chriſt, the ſon of David according to the fleſh, the Church, as one undivided fold, was then promiſed by the divine Spirit, that it ſhould multiply and flouriſh under one ſhepherd to the end of the world.

§ XLVI.

§ XLVI. *The prophet Daniel.* C. 13.

A. M. 3410, *Before J. C.* 590. AT the time, that king Joakim firſt fell into the hands of Nabuchodonoſor, Daniel, a youth of the royal blood of Juda, was with many others carried away to Babylon. When they were brought thither, he with three other virtuous and comely youths, whoſe names were Azarias, Ananias, and Miſael, was choſen out by Nabuchodonoſor's order to be inſtructed in the language and manners of the Chaldeans. Aſphenez, the maſter of the eunuchs, committed them to the care of Malaſar, a principal officer at court, who had orders to ſee them daintily nouriſhed with the proviſions of meat and wine from the king's table, that at the end of three years they might be fit to appear before the king. The religious youths being afraid of eating any thing, that was forbidden them by the law, earneſtly intreated Aſphenez not to inſiſt upon their taſting any thing beſides water and legumes. Aſphenez, however willing to indulge them, was apprehenſive leſt ſuch a diet inſtead of nouriſhing might make them look pale and meager, which he knew would diſpleaſe the king. Daniel therefore made his application to Malaſar, and begged they might be allowed to try their meager diet only for ten days. Malaſar conſented, and at the end of the term there appeared upon their cheeks a more freſh and more healthy bloom, than in any of the other children, who had been pampered with the king's delicacies. Hence we ſee, how much God is pleaſed with a well-regulated abſtinence, according to the order, which he has eſtabliſhed, and that it is not ſo much in the food we take, as in the bleſſing, which he gives it, that the nouriſhment of life conſiſts. The four Hebrew children were preſented to the king at the end of three years, and were found ſo well accompliſhed, that in ſcience and wiſdom they far ſurpaſſed the natives of the country. Daniel diſtinguiſhed himſelf even above his companions. He ſhone with ſuperior talents, and began to be known for his gift of prophecy,

prophecy, which he diſcovered very early in life in the affair of the chaſte Suſanna.

Suſanna was the daughter of Helcias, a religious man amongſt the Jewiſh captives, and married to one Joakim, who for his riches was diſtinguiſhed amongſt his countrymen, and to whoſe houſe they reſorted to have their private conteſts decided by the two judges, whom the Babylonians permitted them to chuſe every year. Suſanna by her religious parents had been timely inſtructed in the law of God, and received an education conformable to its precepts. To this pious education the holy Fathers attribute the virtues of her riper years. Her prudent and chaſte conduct had acquired her a reputation, which all admired, and which none but the two wicked elders, who were appointed judges that year, would have attempted to rob her of. As they frequented Joakim's houſe, they fixed their eyes upon his wife, and fell in love with her; for the comlineſs of her features was equal to the chaſtity of her mind. They obſerved, that when the people departed at noon, Suſanna went every day to take a private walk in her huſband's orchard, where there was a bathing place. They were as yet ignorant of each other's ſecret deſigns, but happening one day to meet in the ſame place, and for the ſame wicked purpoſe of watching an opportunity to meet with Suſanna alone, they diſcovered their paſſion to one another, and agreed to concur together in purſuing it. They ſtole one day privately into the orchard, and lay concealed. Suſanna ſuſpecting nothing of their being there, went as uſual to take her walk; it was a hot day, and the coolneſs of the ſtream invited her to bathe. She bade the two maids, that attended her, fetch the oil and waſhing balls, and carefully ſhut the doors of the orchard. The maids did as they were ordered, and went out by a back door. They were no ſooner gone, than the two elders ſuddenly aroſe, and running up to Suſanna, made their criminal propoſals, and preſſed her conſent, ſaying, that if ſhe refuſed, they would bear witneſs of her having ſent away her maids, that ſhe might ſin

ſin in private with a young man, they had diſcovered with her. The virtuous Suſanna ſighed, and ſaid, I am ſtreightened on every ſide; for if I do this thing, it is death to me, and if I do it not, I ſhall not eſcape your hands: but it is better for me to fall guiltleſs into your hands, than to ſin in the ſight of God. With that ſhe raiſed her voice, and as loud as ſhe could, cried out for help. The elders alſo cried out at the ſame time: full of malice and vexation, they ran to the orchard gate, and declared to all they met, that they had ſurpriſed Suſanna in the fact of adultery; that they had found her with a young man, whom they had attempted to ſecure, but for want of help had been forced to let go. An accuſation was then lodged in form againſt the innocent Suſanna, and ſhe was cited to take her trial next day before the people.

§ XLVII. *Chaſtity of Suſanna. Dan.* 13.

A. M. 3410. *Before J. C.* 590. SUSANNA's family were all in tears; her friends ſtood bluſhing with ſhame, and covered with confuſion: they had been long acquainted with her character, and knew it to be the very reverſe of what ſhe was then accuſed of. She was carried to the place of trial; the two elders were already there, her judges, witneſſes, and accuſers. She ſtood before them modeſtly covered with her veil, which thoſe wicked men commanded to be drawn from her face, that ſo at leaſt they might be ſatisfied with her beauty. Her friends and acquaintance wept. She poured forth a flood of tears, and lifting up her eyes to Heaven, as the witneſs of her innocence, placed her confidence in the Lord. The two elders, riſing up in the midſt of the people, laid their hands upon her head, ſtated the charge, and related a fictitious ſtory of their own to prove it. The people being ſwayed by their authority, and impoſed upon by the venerable appearance of their hoary locks, condemned her to death, upon no other evidence, than that of her iniquitous accuſers.

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As ſoon as ſentence was given, Suſanna with a loud voice called upon God, to whom the moſt hidden things are known, before they come to paſs, and ſolemnly declared, that falſe witneſs had been borne againſt her; that ſhe was innocent, and ſhould die guiltleſs of the crime, which was maliciouſly forged by her enemies. Her cries were heard by the Lord, tho' diſregarded by men. As ſhe was led to be put to death, Daniel, a young boy, being moved by the impulſe of God's holy Spirit, cried aloud, I am innocent of the blood of this woman: return to judgment, ye children of Iſrael, for they have borne falſe witneſs againſt her. Tho' ſingle and unſupported in the middle of a furious croud, ſays Saint Bernard, Daniel raiſed his voice in favour of oppreſſed innocence, and publicly proteſted againſt a ſentence, which he knew to be unjuſt. He had the people and the judges againſt him; but he rather choſe to expoſe himſelf to the cenſure of men, than by a guilty ſilence betray his conſcience in the ſight of God. The people were ſtruck, and returned in haſte to the place of judgment. The old men invited Daniel, ſince God had given him the honour of old age, to ſit down amongſt them. Daniel told the people to ſeparate the two old men, that he might examine them apart. His advice was followed; he queſtioned them ſeparately about the place, and aſked under what tree, they had ſeen the pretended crime committed. They had not been aware of that queſtion, nor prepared their anſwer; the one contradicted what the other had affirmed. The forgery by that means was detected; the adulterous judges were convicted of perjury and ſlander, and condemned to ſuffer the puniſhment, to which they had juſt before condemned the chaſte and innocent Suſanna.

The holy Fathers ſpeak in a very high ſtrain of Suſanna's virtue; ſhe may be juſtly ſtiled the honour of her ſex, while the two elders will be always deteſted, as the diſgrace of men. Being judges, and advanced in life, their age and office gave them great ſway amongſt the people, and that ſway they made uſe of to oppreſs the innocent for a crime, of which they alone were guilty.

ty. Admirable on the other hand is the fortitude, that Suſanna ſhowed in the attack, they made upon her. Alone and deſtitute of every ſuccour, but what ſhe hoped from God, ſhe was ſuddenly aſſaulted by two men, who ſolicited her to an action, which her heart deteſted: they promiſed her life and ſecreſy, if ſhe conſented, public ſhame and death, if ſhe refuſed. Suſanna being thus reduced to the alternative, either of conſenting to ſin to ſave her reputation and life from danger, or of ſacrificing both to preſerve her innocence, ſhe did what the love of virtue inſpired her to do; ſhe turned her thoughts on God, in whom her heart had confidence, as the Scripture expreſſes. She conſidered him preſent, as the judge and witneſs of her conduct: her reſolution was to preſerve her ſoul from guilt, to retain the favour and friendſhip of her Creator: reſigned to whatever the malice of men could do againſt her, ſhe choſe to ſecure herſelf a life, that ſhould never end. Her ſteady virtue therefore received the divine bleſſing, her innocence was cleared, her huſband and friends gave praiſe to God her protector, and her chaſtity is become a pattern for all ſucceeding ages.

§ XLVIII. *Nabuchodonoſor's dream. Dan. 2.*

A. M. 3417, *Before J. C.* 583. THE manner, in which Daniel had acquitted himſelf in ſaving the life of Suſanna, gained him great credit in the ſight of the people: his fame from that day forward began to increaſe, and he was ſoon after called forth to ſhine in a more conſpicuous ſphere of life. A ſkill more than human in interpreting dreams, ſuch as formerly paved the way to Joſeph's preferment in Egypt, was the occaſion of Daniel's riſing to the higheſt dignities in Babylon. But Daniel's talent was ſtill more excellent than that of Joſeph, in as much as Daniel diſcovered not only the meaning of the dream, but alſo the dream itſelf. Nabuchodonoſor had had a dream, of which he remembered nothing more, than that he had been terribly

bly alarmed. He ſent for the wiſe men and aſtrologers of his kingdom, to tell him what it was. They all declared it to be impoſſible for any man upon earth to divine what another man had dreamt of, and that none but the Gods themſelves, whoſe converſation was not with men, could ſatisfy the king's demand. Nabuchodonoſor grew furious at their anſwer, and in his wrath gave immediate orders that all, who had the name of wiſe men, ſhould be put to death. The order was haſtened into execution: Daniel and his three companions, Ananias, Azarias, and Miſael, were reputed in the number of wiſe men, and accordingly ſought for to be put to death. They had not yet heard of the extraordinary and cruel decree, which the king had paſſed for that purpoſe, and remained ignorant of their danger, till the very man, who had the execution of the order, informed them of it. Daniel went immediately to the king, and begged he might have ſome time allowed him to conſider upon and reſolve his intricate queſtion. Being indulged in his requeſt, he came back to his companions, deſired them to join with him in prayer to the Father of lights, and that very night the whole myſtery was revealed to him in a viſion. He preſented himſelf next day before the king, and offered not only to relate, but to interpret the dream, which none of the wiſe men of Babylon were knowing enough to find out. Nabuchodonoſor ſeemed to expreſs ſome doubt, whether Daniel himſelf would be able to ſatisfy his demand, but deſired to hear, what he had to ſay. Daniel then began: Being in your bed, O King, you began to think what revolutions might happen in after times, and He, to whom no myſtery is unknown, ſhowed you the things, that are to come. You ſaw in your ſleep a tall and bulky ſtatue of a horrible aſpect, ſtanding before you. The head of the ſtatue was of gold, the breaſt and arms of ſilver, the belly and the thighs of braſs, the legs of iron, and the feet partly iron, partly clay. You ſaw it ſtanding in that manner, till a ſtone, which without the help of human hands was cut from a mountain, ſtruck it on the feet, and crumbled the whole into duſt: after

that

that the ſtone itſelf became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. Such, O King, was your dream, and this is the interpretation of it. The golden head of this huge ſtatue denotes you and your empire. To yours ſhall ſucceed a ſecond, but leſs empire of ſilver, which ſhall be followed by one of braſs, till the fourth of iron ſhall ariſe and break down all before it. But as the ſtatue's feet were partly iron and partly clay, ſo ſhall this kingdom be parted within itſelf, when from God a fifth kingdom ſhall be eſtabliſhed, which ſhall extend itſelf over the whole earth, and which no power ſhall ever overturn, and no length of ages put an end to. Nabuchodonoſor liſtened with attention to the wonderful narration, ſtood aſtoniſhed at the Prophet's wiſdom, and at the concluſion of his diſcourſe bowed reſpectfully down to do him homage, confeſſing his God to be the God of Gods, and the Lord of kings. Daniel was immediately loaded with honours and royal favours; he was created prince over all the provinces of Babylon; and at his requeſt, his three Hebrew companions, whoſe names were changed into Sidrach, Miſach, and Abdenago, were appointed to preſide over the public works in the particular province of Babylon. This department required their attendance in the country, while Daniel, now called Balthaſſar, was conſtantly about the king's palace.

§ XLIX. *Hebrews in the fiery furnace. Dan.* 3.

A. M. 3417, *Before J. C.* 583. THE three young Hebrews ſoon found, that in their elevated ſtation they had much envy and malevolence to ſtruggle againſt. The Babylonian nobles thought themſelves diſgraced by thoſe honours, which were beſtowed on ſtrangers, and watched every opportunity of revenge. Nabuchodonoſor had ſet up a golden ſtatue of an enormous ſize, and by a public edict commanded the nobles and chiefs of his kingdom to come to the dedication of it, and to adore it under pain of death. The day appointed for the ceremony was at hand; the

Chaldean

Chaldean princes, the captains, and governors of the provinces, repaired to the plain, where the ſtatue ſtood; the muſic began to play, and at the ſound all fell proſtrate, as they were ordered, to adore it. Ananias, Azarias, and Miſael, did not attend: their abſence was taken notice of by their enemies, who eagerly ſeized that occaſion of venting their ſpleen, and of accuſing them of diſobedience to the king. The king ſent for them; he ſtormed, and threatened to caſt them into the fiery furnace, unleſs they complied with his edict, like the reſt of his ſubjects. The three youths were not to be moved by ſuch threats; full of faith and holy confidence, they ſteadily replied, that the God, whom they adored, was able to deliver them from every evil, that the king's hand could throw upon them; but if it was his divine will to let them ſuffer, that they were ready for the worſt, and the king might know, that they would not adore his ſtatue, nor any of his gods. Irritated by an anſwer, which he did not expect, and which his pride could not brook, Nabuchodonoſor ordered them to be bound, and caſt into the burning furnace, which on that occaſion was made ſeven times more hot than uſual. The order was immediately executed: the three Hebrews were bound by the feet, and caſt into the flaming furnace, clad as they were with their robes and garments. They fell down amidſt the harmleſs flames, whilſt the men, who caſt them in, were burnt to death. Then Azarias ſtanding up, raiſed his voice in the name of all three, and called upon the God of their forefathers for protection. Almighty God ſent his Angel to their relief; the Angel ſtruck off their bands, and fanned them with a moiſt refreſhing breeze, as he walked to and fro with them amidſt the ſurrounding flames. Full of admiration and gratitude for this miraculous interpoſition of the divine power, they all three, as with one voice, began to ſing a ſublime hymn of thankgiving, in which they invited the whole creation to join them in proclaiming the praiſes of the Moſt-high. The king's ſervants in the interim ceaſed not to throw in brimſtone, pitch, and tow, to feed the flames, which

burſt

burſt out, and conſumed ſuch of the Chaldeans, as were near the furnace. The ſpectators ſtood aſtoniſhed: Nabuchodonoſor roſe in haſte to behold the holy youths in the furnace, and as he approached, ſaw with them a fourth perſonage, whoſe form was like that of an Angel. Struck with aſtoniſhment, he went to the door of the furnace, and ſaid, Sidrach, Miſach, and Abdenago, ſervants of the moſt high God, come forth! They came out immediately: the Babylonian chiefs flocked round to examine them, and found that the fire had had no power on their bodies, that it had neither touched their garments, nor ſinged ſo much as a ſingle hair of their head. Then Nabuchodonoſor broke forth in praiſe of the great God, who had ſo wonderfully delivered his three faithful ſervants, and publiſhed an edict, by which he made it death for any one, who ſhould dare to blaſpheme the God of Sidrach, Maſach, and Abdenago; and them he promoted to new dignities in the province of Babylon.

The three Hebrew youths, thus tried and thus protected in the fiery furnace, exhibit a lively image of the Saints, as the holy Fathers remark, in their various trials of affliction. An Angel of the Lord deſcended with them into the furnace, the fire conſumed nothing, that belonged to them beſides their bonds; they felt a cool and refreſhing comfort from the flames, which burſt out with vehemence upon their tormentors. So it happens in the perſecutions of the Saints. Whenever perſecutors vent their ſpite, whether by tortures or by penal laws, the ſharpeſt pain recoils back upon themſelves, while the objects of their malice are repaid with conſolation in their ſufferings for a good cauſe. Afflictions only hurt the body, they purify and perfect the ſouls of God's choſen ſervants: the unction of the Holy Ghoſt allays their outward pains, and fills their hearts with inward joy.

§ L.

§ L. *Nabuchodonoſor's chaſtiſement. Dan.* 4.

THE good fortune, that attended Nabuchodonoſor in his warlike expeditions, had added Egypt to his former conqueſts. Victory made him inſolent: his immenſe riches, and vaſt extent of empire inſpired him with ſuch notions of his own excellence, that he fancied himſelf to be ſomething more than mortal. But as a proof to all ſucceeding ages, that the greateſt potentates in ſpite of their proſperity and ſplendid opulence are ſtill but poor and feeble men, God was pleaſed to chaſtiſe that haughty monarch in a manner the moſt humiliating. Nabuchodonoſor in a dream ſaw the heavy ſtroke, which was prepared to lower him, tho' he could not comprehend it. Perplexed and terrified at the myſterious viſion, that was ſhown him, he conſulted Daniel, of whoſe enlightened knowledge and ſuperior wiſdom he had been already witneſs, and begged him to interpret his dream, which he related, as follows. In my ſleep, ſaid he, I ſaw a flouriſhing tree, which ſeemed to lift its head above the clouds, and to ſpread its branches from one extremity of the earth to the other. It was luxuriantly clothed with comely leaves, and loaded with delicious fruit. The animals of the earth were nouriſhed under its ſhade, and the birds of the air made their dwelling in its boughs. The form of ſome heavenly watchman deſcended from above, who with a loud voice cried out; cut down the tree, lop off the boughs and ſcatter the fruit thereof; but leave the ſtump of its roots, and let it be tied with a band of iron and braſs; for ſeven revolving ſeaſons let it be wet with the dew of heaven, let his heart be changed from man's, and let his portion be with beaſts amongſt the graſs of the earth. Daniel liſtened attentively to the king's narration, till he had heard the whole: he remained ſilent for a whole hour, fixed as it were in thought, and much troubled in mind, 'till at the king's command he thus began to explain: The tree,

A. M. 3434, *Before J. C.* 566.

tree, my liege, which you saw, is yourself, whose greatness reaches to the heavens, and whose power extends to the boundaries of the earth. The words of the holy watchman express the sentence, which the Most-high hath pronounced against you. For you shall be driven from the society of men, your dwelling shall be with beasts and the wild inhabitants of the forest, you shall eat grass like an ox, you shall be exposed to the dew of heaven, till at the end of seven years you shall be convinced, that the Most-high ruleth over all kingdoms here below, and disposeth of them, as he pleaseth. But as the root of the tree was suffered to remain, so shall your kingdom still remain to you, after you shall have known that all power is from heaven. Wherefore be not displeased at my advice, which is, that you redeem your sins by alms-deeds, and your iniquities by being merciful to the poor: God may perhaps forgive you your offences. Nabuchodonosor did not profit by the advice. At the end of twelve months as he was walking in his palace, and priding himself upon the great achievements, by which he had raised Babylon to its present pitch of grandeur, he heard a voice from heaven repeating to him the sentence of his chastisement, as before pronounced by Daniel: he was immediately struck by the hand of God, a beast's heart was given him, and he ran away from the company of men to eat grass like an ox, and be exposed to the dew of heaven for seven years. During that time his hair grew out like the plumage of an eagle, and his nails became like the claws of a bird of prey. At the end of seven years he lifted up his eyes to heaven and was restored to his senses. Being sought for by his nobles and magistrates, he was reinstated in his kingdom and former glory. Cured of his pride and convinced of the justice of that divine power, which had humbled him to the earth, he published a decree, in which he related those wonders, which the Most-high had wrought towards him, that all nations of the earth might know, that the God of Daniel, was the true and only God of the universe.

Such

Such was the chaſtiſement, which God inflicted on Nabuchodonoſor for his pride. That haughty monarch had exalted himſelf with great inſolence againſt the Almighty: he was therefore degraded from his throne, and driven out to dwell with wild beaſts in the foreſt. Similar to that is the diſgrace, which every ſinner incurs before God, when in contradiction to reaſon he follows the impulſe of his paſſions, and quits the fellowſhip of the Saints to run after the objects of his ſenſual appetites. He is then rightly compared to irrational beaſts, ſays the Pſalmiſt, and is made like unto them. To riſe from ſo deplorable a ſtate, let him lift up his eyes to heaven, as Nabuchodonoſor did: God rejects not the ſighs of the penitent, he is ready to pardon and to ſpare, whenever his mercy is implored with ſincerity and truth.

§ LI. *Idol of Bel and the Dragon. Dan.* 14.

NABUCHODONOSOR did not long ſurvive his re-eſtabliſhment in the kingdom of Babylon. He was ſucceeded by his ſon Evilmerodach, as it is generally thought, who ſeems to have been a friend to the captive Jews: for upon his acceſſion to the throne, he not only releaſed king Joachin from the priſon, in which he had been confined ſeven and thirty years, but alſo treated him with a reſpect ſuitable to his royal dignity. Daniel enjoyed the ſame honours under Evilmerodach, as he had under his predeceſſor. Far from growing remiſs in his duty to God by the favours he enjoyed at court, the holy Prophet employed his power to deſtroy the worſhip of idols, and promote that of the living God. The favorite idol of the Babylonians was called Bel, to whom they affected to pay great reſpect, tho' the notions they had formed of his godſhip, were pitifully low and ſenſual. They fancied him to ſtand in need of daily food for his exiſtence, which they plentifully ſupplied him with. A magnificent temple had been built in his honour; thither they repaired to pay him their devotions, and thi-

A. M. 3442, *Before J. C.* 558.

ther they every day ſent him for his ſupport many meaſures of the fineſt flower, forty ſheep, and a proportionable quantity of wine. The prieſts of this idol entered by night thro' a ſubterraneous paſſage, which they had ſecretly contrived, and by carrying off the proviſions, made the ignorant people believe, that they were eaten by Bel. Even the king himſelf was impoſed upon by the groſs impoſture, and went every day to worſhip Bel in the temple. He invited Daniel to accompany him: Daniel was too enlightened and ſteady in his worſhip of the true God to comply with the king's requeſt. The king aſked him, why he would not adore Bel? Becauſe I acknowledge no artificial gods, replied the holy man; I worſhip none but the living God. The king was ſurpriſed, that Bel ſhould not be thought a living god, ſince he daily conſumed ſuch quantities of meat & drink. Daniel ſmiled, and ſaid, that a god, which was nothing but clay within and braſs without, could not want either meat or drink. The king in anger called for his prieſts, and threatened them with death, if they did not tell him, what became of the meat, which was ſet every day before the idol. If it is conſumed by Bel, ſaid he, Daniel ſhall die, for having blaſphemed againſt him. Be it done according to thy word, replied Daniel. The king therefore, with Daniel, and the prieſts of Bel, ſeventy in number, entered the temple together. Let the meats be ſet upon a table, ſaid the prieſts, let the wine be prepared, the door then ſhut and ſealed with the king's ring; and if in the morning they are not found to have been eaten by Bel, we ſhall ſuffer death; but if they are, let Daniel then die, who has lied againſt us. The prieſts went out, the king ſet the meats before Bel, and Daniel commanded his ſervants to bring aſhes, which he ſifted all over the pavement before the king; and going forth they ſhut the door, and departed after having ſealed it with the king's ring. The prieſts entered by night, according to cuſtom, with their wives and children, thro' a private paſſage, and either conſumed or carried off the whole proviſion. The king aroſe early in the morning, and Daniel with him. Eager

ger to know the event, he repaired ſtreight to the temple, and examined the ſeal, which he found untouched and whole. As ſoon as he had opened the door, he caſt his eye upon the table, and ſeeing the proviſions gone, cried out, Great art thou, O Bel, and there is no deceit in thee! Daniel laughed, and held the king from paſſing the threſhold, before he had obſerved the pavement, and beheld the foot-ſteps of men, women, and children, that were imprinted in the aſhes. The king upon examination found private doors, thro' which they entered, and being reſolved to ſtrike at the root of the impoſture, ordered the prieſts, with their wives and children, to be put to death, delivering Bel into the power of Daniel, who deſtroyed both the idol and the temple.

Daniel had ſcarce diſabuſed the king of one error, when he fell into another equally groſs: for a monſtrous dragon being found in the ſame place, the ſuperſtitious Babylonians ſet him up for a god inſtead of Bel, and adored him. The king endeavoured to perſuade Daniel to join with them in their adoration, ſince he could not ſay of this, as he had ſaid of Bel, that he was not a living God. Daniel anſwered, that he adored the Lord his God, the creator of heaven and earth; that this other was no living god, and that by his permiſſion he would kill the dragon without ſword or club. The king having granted him leave, he made up a compoſition of pitch, greaſe, and hair, which he rolled into lumps and gave to the dragon. The dragon ſwallowed them, and burſt aſunder; upon which Daniel exclaimed, Behold him, whom ye worſhipped! The eſſential ſervice that Daniel rendered to the king and people of Babylon, by diſabuſing them of their errors, ought to have received ſome recompenſe: it met with none; it was repaid with enmity and perſecution, the uſual portion of the Saints, in return for the good they wiſh and do to ungrateful men.

§ LII.

§ LII. *Daniel in the lions den. Dan.* 14.

A. M. 3442, *Before J. C.* 558. THE grandees of Babylon, being exaſperated at ſeeing their deities deſtroyed, reſolved to be ſatisfied with nothing leſs than the death of him, who had deſtroyed them. They gathered round the king in a tumultuous manner, and inſiſted upon Daniel's being delivered into their hands, threatening to deſtroy him and his houſe if he refuſed to comply. They told him that he was become a Jew, that he had demoliſhed Bel, that he had ſlain the Prieſts and killed the dragon. Terrified at their inſulting menaces, the king yielded to neceſſity, and abandoned Daniel to their reſentment. The people no ſooner had the prophet in their power, but they caſt him into the den, where ſeven hungry lions ſtood ready to devour him. To make the animals more greedy of their prey, they were kept faſting, and during the time that Daniel was confined amongſt them, were deprived of their daily food. But the Lord, who had ſaved the three youths in the fiery furnace, forgot not Daniel in the lions den. By the miniſtry of an Angel he not only ſhut up the lions mouths, but alſo provided him with food in the very place, where he had been thrown for food to the ravenous animals. There was at that time in Judea a Prophet called Habacuc. This virtuous man had prepared a meſs of pottage and broken bread for the reapers, and was going with it into the field, when behold, an Angel preſented himſelf in the way, and bade him carry it to Daniel in the lions den at Babylon: Habacuc replied, that he did not know where Babylon was: upon which the Angel took him up by the hair of his head, and conveying him in that wonderful manner thro' the air, ſet him down at the mouth of Daniel's priſon. Habacuc called upon him by name to take the dinner, which the Lord had ſent him. Daniel thankfully received it, and the Angel in a moment reſtored Habacuc to the ſpot in Jewry, from whence he had brought him. Daniel had now paſſed ſix days with the lions:

lions: on the seventh day the king came to the den, not so much to set the Prophet free, as to lament his death. He looked into the cave, and seeing him not only sound, but likewise full of life, with extacy exclaimed, Great art Thou, O Lord the God of Daniel! He ordered the holy man to be taken out that instant, and the promoters of his intended death to be thrown in, where the lions devoured them in a moment before him. The king, who was witness of the fact, then said: Let all the inhabitants of the universe revere the God of Daniel; for he is the Saviour, and he it is, who performs prodigies and wonders upon the earth; who hath delivered Daniel out of the lions den.

Ecclesiastical writers observe, that if in imitation of the Babylonian king the laws of retaliation were properly enforced, the world would soon be cleared of all rash and false accusers, nor should we see the innocent so often sacrificed, nor the slanderer so shamefully encouraged. But such evils are permitted, says Saint Gregory, for the good, which an all-seeing God knows how to draw from them. By such trials he polishes the virtues of his Saints; by sufferings he strengthens their fidelity in his service, and adds new lustre to their crown. Thus Abel's innocence was tried by Cain's malice; thus was Jacob's patience proved by Esau's violence, and David's meekness perfected by the persecutions of Saul.

§ LII. *Visions of Daniel.* *Dan.* 7.

EVILMERODACH reigned no more than two years, and had for successor his son Baltassar the last of the Chaldean kings. In the first year of this king's reign Daniel gives us an account of a vision he had in the following manner. I was in my bed, says he, and behold, I saw the sea agitated by the four jarring winds of heaven, and from the sea came forth four monstrous beasts,

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beaſts, differing in ſhape one from the other. The firſt was like a lioneſs with the wings of an eagle. I beheld, till her wings were plucked off, and ſhe was lifted up from the earth, and ſtood upon her feet as a man, and the heart of a man was given to her. The ſecond beaſt reſembled a bear, with three rows in its mouth, to which it was ſaid, Ariſe and devour much fleſh. The third had the appearance of a leopard, that had four heads and four wings, like the wings of a bird. The fourth beaſt was of a more terrible aſpect than any of the other three. He was exceeding ſtrong, and had great iron teeth, eating and breaking in pieces, and treading down the reſt with his feet. He had ten horns, in the middle of which ſprung another little horn, at the appearance of which three of the firſt horns were plucked up: this horn had eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth, which uttered big words. Such was the firſt ſcene exhibited to the Prophet's view, and to this ſucceeded another, in which the Ancient of days, God himſelf, appeared upon his throne of glory, ſurrounded by thouſands and thouſands of miniſtering ſpirits. And, behold! with the clouds of heaven came, as it were, the Son of man, to whom the Ancient of days gave honour, and power and empire, which ſhall never end. I trembled with reſpectful fear, continues Daniel, but being eager to know the meaning of what I ſaw, I approached near to one of the heavenly attendants, and aſked him, what theſe things were meant to ſignify. The four beaſts ſignify four kingdoms, replied the Spirit, which ſhall ariſe upon the face of the earth. I then deſired to be informed of ſome particulars concerning the fourth beaſt, which appeared ſo dreadful and different from the other three, and the Angel told me; This fourth beaſt is the fourth kingdom, which ſhall give laws to the univerſe; the power of this kingdom is greater than any, that went before. It ſhall devour the whole earth, and ſhall tread it down and break it in pieces. The ten horns of this kingdom are ten kings, who ſhall reign therein. After them ſhall ariſe another king more powerful than the former, and he ſhall bring down three

kings,

kings. He ſhall open his mouth in blaſphemies againſt the Moſt-high, he ſhall caſt the Saints of God under his feet, and ſhall proudly think, that he has the power to alter times and laws at his diſcretion. But his power ſhall be ſoon broken not to riſe again: for no longer than a time, and times and half a time ſhall the Juſt be delivered into his hands. The Ancient of days ſhall then come, and give judgment to his Saints on high. The time and times and half a time is a myſterious expreſſion, found alſo in the revelations of Saint John upon the ſame ſubject, and ſignifies a year, and years and half a year, that is, three years and a half. The four great kingdoms here mentioned by the Prophet are univerſally underſtood to be the four great monarchies of the Aſſyrians, Perſians, Greeks and Romans, and the laſt horn ariſing amidſt the ten upon the fourth beaſt to denote the power and reign of Antichriſt for three years and a half.

Daniel two years after was favoured with another viſion, in which he was appriſed of ſeveral particular circumſtances, relating to the ſecond and third, that is the Perſian and Greek empires. And in a viſion, which he had in the third year of Cyrus, he was carried by the ſame prophetic ſpirit thro' the hiſtory of the Perſian kings, of Alexander the Great, and his ſucceſſors in the Grecian empire, and of the wars and perſecutions, that they were to raiſe againſt the people of God, till the Roman arms ſhould prevail over them, who had conquered before. Daniel ſpeaks of theſe memorable revolutions in a ſtile ſo clear and intelligible, that Porphyry, the great enemy of Chriſtianity, not being able to diſpute the truth of his words, has repreſented them as written by an hiſtorian, who related paſt events, leſt he ſhould be obliged to confeſs that one ſovereign God of the univerſe, who alone can give his Prophets an inſight of things, which are yet to come.

But the moſt remarkable and moſt important of Daniel's prophecies is that, in which he ſpecifies and determines the preciſe time, when Chriſt the Prince was to come, and the Saint of Saints to be anointed.

In

In the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede whilst he was pouring out his fervent prayers for the Jewish people, and considering the seventy years, during which their captivity was to last, according to the prediction of Jeremias, he saw the Angel Gabriel coming towards him. Because thou art a man of desires, said the Angel to him, I am come to tell thee, that the seventy weeks upon thy people are shortened, that iniquity may cease, that everlasting justice may be brought, and prophecy be fulfilled. Know then, that from the date of the order, which shall be published for the rebuilding of Jerusalem unto Christ the prince, there shall be seven and sixty two, that is, sixty nine weeks; and after this, viz. in the middle of the ensuing week Christ shall be slain, and the victim and the sacrifice shall fail; and the people, who shall deny him, shall not be his: there shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation, and the desolation shall continue even to the end.

Hence it appears, that, as the chief circumstances of our blessed Saviour's life, to wit, his birth of a pure virgin, his miracles, his passion, death and resurrection had been revealed to the prophet Isaiah, so to the prophet Daniel was now shown the precise time, when these prophecies were to be accomplished. The Prophet's weeks are by all interpreters of the holy Scripture understood to include years for days; so that sixty nine weeks of years amount to the number of 483 years. The grant for rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem was made by Artaxerxes in the twentieth year of his reign, which was the 3548 of the world. Now if to 3548 we add Daniel's weeks of years 483, we shall bring it to 4031, which according to the vulgar computation was the year, in which Christ our Lord was baptized by Saint John and began to announce himself to the world three years and about three months before he died upon a Cross for our redemption.

§ LIV.

§ LIV. *King Baltaſſar's condemnation. Dan.* 5.

BALTASSAR the king made a ſumptuous feaſt for a thouſand of his nobles, and every one drank according to his age. Being elevated with wine, he ordered the ſacred veſſels, which Nabuchodonoſor had taken out of the Temple at Jeruſalem, to be brought in; and he, and his officers, and his wives and concubines drank out of them; they drank wine, and ſung the praiſes of their idols and graven gods. In the height of their profane mirth there appeared the fingers, as it were of a man's hand, writing ſome unintelligible words upon the wall over-againſt the great candleſtick. The king beheld the joints of the hand, that wrote; his countenance grew pale, his heart throbbed, his knees thro' fear ſtruck one againſt the other, guilt and remorſe troubled his very ſoul. He cried aloud for his wiſemen to come and explain away his fears. They came; he promiſed great honours to any of them, that ſhould interpret to him the meaning of the myſterious writing: they looked at it, they ſtood perplexed and puzzled where to begin: they knew not how to read, much leſs explicate the unintelligible characters; the king's trouble increaſed, his nobles were in the utmoſt conſternation. The queen, being told what had happened, went to the banqueting room, and endeavoured to calm the king's mind: ſhe mentioned Daniel, whom on account of his ſuperior wiſdom Nabuchodonoſor had appointed prince of the wiſe men. Daniel was immediately introduced: the king promiſed to honour him with a purple robe and a golden collar, and to create him the third man in his kingdom, if he would only read the writing, and declare the interpretation thereof, which the wiſeſt of his Chaldeans were not able to do. The holy Prophet anſwered: Keep thy rewards to thyſelf, and reſerve thy gifts for others: the writing I will read thee, O king, and ſhow thee the interpretation thereof. Nabuchodonoſor your father was a great and illuſtrious prince; but when his heart was lifted up, and his

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his ſpirit hardened into pride, he was degraded from his throne, driven from the company of men, made to dwell with the wild aſſes, and to eat graſs like an ox, his body being wet with the dew of heaven, till he humbly ſubmitted to the dominion of the Moſt-High. You alſo have exalted yourſelf againſt the God of heaven, you have profaned his ſacred veſſels, you have to his diſhonour extolled your molten gods, which can neither ſee nor hear you. For this reaſon the hand by his omnipotent decree hath written your condemnation in theſe three words, Mane, Thekel, Phares. For this is the meaning of them. Mane, God hath numbered the days of thy kingdom, and the number is now finiſhed. Thekel, Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found to be under weight. Phares, Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Perſians. Baltaſſar, altho' he heard his doom in the interpretation he received, nevertheleſs honoured the interpreter, and according to his promiſe, promoted Daniel to the dignity of being third man in his kingdom, little thinking that his kingdom was to end that very night.

Cyrus, who commanded the Perſian army for his uncle Darius the Mede, was then before the walls of Babylon; and having opened himſelf a way, which the Babylonians did not ſuſpect, into the city, he ſurpriſed king Baltaſſar in his palace at night, and by his death put an end to the Chaldean empire. The ſudden and unforeſeen ſtroke, that carried off the wicked Baltaſſar at an hour he the leaſt expected, ought to be a warning, ſays Saint Jerom, to all thoſe Chriſtians, whoſe ſinful exceſſes and impenitent lives expoſe them to the daily riſk of being ſurpriſed by a like untimely end.

§ LV. *Daniel a ſecond time in the lions den. Dan. 6.*

A. M. 3466, *Before J. C.* 534. THE revolution, that extinguiſhed the race of Chaldean kings in Babylon, opened the way, which God had appointed for the re-eſtabliſhment of the Jewiſh people.

Daniel

Daniel enjoyed the ſame favours under the Perſian, as he had under the Babylonian kings. Darius reſpected him, as a man repleniſhed with the ſpirit of God, and having already made him one of the three firſt princes of his kingdom, began to think of appointing him commander in chief over the whole empire. This partiality for a Hebrew captive piqued the Perſian nobles; they envied him his honours, became jealous of his power, and reſolved to do all they could to procure his diſgrace. They laid their counſels together, and deliberated in what manner they ſhould proceed againſt the holy man. For Daniel was ſo faithful to his truſt, and ſo irreproachable in his whole conduct, that there was no room for ſuſpicion, and no grounds for any criminal charge againſt him. They had obſerved his inviolable attachment to the law of God, his ſteady piety and aſſiduity in prayer. There they were in hopes of ſurpriſing him into their ſnares, there they reſolved to attack him, but yet in ſo artful a manner, as to let no one know or ſuſpect their deſign. They preſented themſelves before the king, whom when they had incenſed with their flatteries, and extolled as the ſovereign ſource, from whence all favours and gifts were derived, and ought to flow; they perſuaded him to publiſh an imperial decree, by which it was ordained, that whoſoever during the ſpace of thirty days ſhould preſume to offer any prayer or petition either to God or man except to the king, ſhould be caſt into the lions den. Darius, who was flattered with the propoſal, and ſaw not into its deſign, confirmed and publiſhed the decree, which after that could be neither altered nor tranſgreſſed by any man whatever with impunity. Daniel, who was a man of holy deſires, paid no attention to that ſtrange ordinance. Preferring the law of God to that of men, he retired at his uſual hour three times every day into his chamber, where opening the window, which looked towards Jeruſalem, he knelt down and worſhiped God in fervent prayer. His enemies, ſuſpecting what would happen, were upon the watch to ſurpriſe him; they found him praying and making ſupplication to his God; they haſtened to the king, reminded

minded him of his edict, lodged a formal accuſation againſt Daniel, the Hebrew captive, for having tranſgreſſed it, and inſiſted upon his being caſt into the lions den. The king was much grieved; he intereſted himſelf in behalf of the accuſed, & laboured till ſunſet, to deliver him out of their hands. The nobles perceiving the king's deſign, and being determined not to give up their point, poſitively declared that according to the laws of the Medes and Perſians, no royal decree could be revoked or diſpenſed with, that Daniel had offended, and muſt therefore ſuffer as the law expreſſed. The king could reſiſt no longer: Daniel by his command was brought forth and caſt into the den of the lions. A ſtone was laid upon the mouth of the den, which the king ſealed with his own ring and the ring of the nobles, that no farther violence might be offered to the holy Prophet: for he hoped the lions would reſpect, and the God of heaven deliver him. Darius retired to his palace, would ſuffer no meat to be ſet before him, and laid himſelf down without taking any ſupper. Sleep fled from his eyes, and he could take no reſt; he roſe early in the morning, haſtened to the den, and with a mournful voice called out, Daniel, ſervant of the living God, hath thy God been able to deliver thee from the lions? O king live for ever, anſwered Daniel; my God hath ſent his Angel, and hath ſhut up the mouths of the lions, and they have not hurt me. The king in a tranſport of joy commanded him to be taken out of the den, and his accuſers to take his place. Thoſe men therefore, who had accuſed the holy Prophet, were brought with their wives and children, and being thrown into the den, the lions caught them as they fell, and broke their bones in pieces. Darius then publiſhed a decree, that all within his empire ſhould honour and revere the living and eternal God, who had ſo wonderfully freed his ſervant Daniel from the lions den.

Daniel's example in the duty of prayer, ſays Saint Jerom, ought to be imitated by all Chriſtian people, that God in his mercy may preſerve them from becoming a prey to enemies infinitely more fierce and powerful than lions.

lions. Sin, says the holy Scripture, has the teeth of a lion; its bite is fatal to the soul, and its wound is death; the devil, like a roaring lion, is always upon his round, says Saint Peter, seeking whom he may devour. Our deliverance from such enemies is the effect of God's special grace, which in his ordinary providence he grants only to those who ask it.

§ LVI. *Afflictions of Job. Job* 1.

JOB, so well known for his humble patience, united in himself two things, which are seldom found in the same person, great virtue and great riches. The Scripture does not tell us when this holy man lived; but he is supposed to have been the great grandson of Esau, and cotemporary with the father of Moyses; the text says he dwelt in the land of Hus, a plain and upright man, fearing God and declining from evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, whom he carefully instructed in their duty to God, and educated in the principles of charity and union amongst themselves. He rose early in the morning every eighth day and offered sacrifice for each one of them, that they might not only be purified from sin, but also sanctified by the divine blessing. Satan, who is always upon the watch to tempt and seduce mankind, was vexed to see such virtues practised, and such happiness enjoyed, by a mortal inhabitant of the earth. He did not know, what motive the holy man might have in all that outward show of good, whether the temporal felicity and worldly wealth, which surrounded him, might not possibly be the ground of his piety to God, and make him thus active in the divine service. Being bent upon doing whatever mischief he was able, he asked the Almighty leave to strip Job of his possessions, not doubting but adversity would make him break out into acts of impatience, and provoke him to blaspheme like other men. Almighty God, who knew the unfeigned goodness of his servant's heart, and who was also willing to humble Satan's

Satan's pride, by ſhowing him how impotent his malice was againſt a good man aided by divine grace, gave him the leave he aſked. Satan immediately began to try his utmoſt malice, and, as if he meant to make the holy man deſpair at once, poured out afflictions on him like a torrent, which by flowing in at once ſhould allow him no time to recollect or arm himſelf againſt them. Four different meſſengers, one immediately upon the back of another, came to inform Job of his accumulated misfortunes, that his herds were driven away by the enemy, his flocks killed by lightning, his ſervants ſlain, and his children cruſhed to death by the houſe falling in upon them, as they ſat at table. Job heard the melancholy tale, and tho' the ſharpneſs of the ſtroke pierced his very heart, as appears by the rending of his garments, yet uttered no complaint. With an humble reſignation to the divine will, he fell proſtrate on the ground, adored, and ſaid, Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked ſhall I return to my mother earth; the Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleaſed the Lord, ſo it hath been done: let his name be for ever praiſed. Thus the trials, which were deſigned by Satan to deſtroy, ſerved but to confirm and ſtrengthen the patience of the holy man. The malicious fiend, however, did not deſiſt, but preſented his petition to the Almighty a ſecond time; for his power againſt the Saints goes no further than God is pleaſed to let it, and his petition was to afflict Job's perſon. For the confuſion of Satan's malice, the Lord granted him his requeſt, with an expreſs reſerve not to hurt his ſervant's life. Satan therefore went and ſtruck Job's body with one continued ulcer, from the top of his head to the ſole of his foot. In that ſore condition the holy man left his houſe, and ſeated himſelf upon the dunghill, where with a ſhell he ſcraped off the corruption and the worms, that ſwarmed from his ulcerous body. Of all his wordly goods nothing was then left him but his wife, and ſhe not for his comfort. She upbraided him for his ſimplicity, bade him blaſpheme God, and die. Job bore the laſh of her bitter tongue with the ſame patience, as he bore his other ſufferings,

ſufferings, and only made her this ſhort anſwer: Thou talkeſt like one of the fooliſh women: if from the hand of God we have received good things, why ſhould we not receive likewiſe evil? Job in all this ſinned not by word, and the more nearly united to him the perſon was, who reviled him, the more ſevere was the trial, and the more exemplary is his patience.

§ LVII. *Friends of Job.* *Job* 3.

JOB being reduced to the piteous condition, in which the ſacred writer has deſcribed him upon the dung-hill, met moreover with other trials, that ſeem to have affected him more ſenſibly. Three of his friends, who in the book of Tobias are ſtiled kings, came to viſit and condole with him in his misfortunes. But far from receiving any comfort from them, he was reduced to the diſagreeable neceſſity of defending himſelf againſt their falſe and inſidious reaſoning. Amidſt the evils he endured, his ſolid comfort was the uprightneſs of his heart, and the conſciouſneſs of his paſt innocence. He received his ſufferings, as trials to purify his virtue, like gold in the furnace; he conſidered the ſhortneſs of human life, and conſoled himſelf with the thought of a future reſurrection. I know, ſays he, that my Redeemer lives, that in the laſt day I ſhall riſe from the earth, and that with theſe very eyes I ſhall behold God my Saviour. This was the faith, this the hope of holy Job, and this his three friends endeavoured to deprive him of. They ſtrongly maintained to him, that his ſufferings could be imputed to no other cauſe, than his own guilt: according to the narrow notions of earthly men they concluded, that as his chaſtiſement was grievous, grievous alſo muſt have been his crimes: nor did they content themſelves with the ſimple propoſal of their erroneous maxims, they ſtrove to maintain them by ſophiſtical arguments, and clothed their ſlanders with an air of plauſibility. Job ſtood in need of all his patience to ſupport himſelf under this

this trial: he refuted their calumnies by ſolid reaſoning, he aſſerted and proved his own innocence, he tried to convince them of their miſtake, and adduced every argument to ſet them right. But they were not willing to be informed, and by their obſtinacy we ſee, how dangerous a thing it is to be miſled by prejudice, and how hard a thing it is to remove an impreſſion, which has been once entertained. For having ſuffered themſelves at firſt to be drawn aſide by falſe appearances, that ſeemed to favour their erroneous notions, they would not afterwards believe, but the ſufferings of their friend were the ſufferings of a criminal. God himſelf condeſcended in the end to juſtify the innocence of his injured ſervant. He ſhowed his indignation againſt the falſity of thoſe pretended friends, treated their principles as folly, and declared, that he would not pardon them their ſin, but at the requeſt of him, whom they had wickedly endeavoured to ſtigmatiſe with guilt.

Hence we are to learn, ſay the holy Fathers, never to judge ill of the good and virtuous on account of the diſadvantages of life under which they may chance to labour: our judgment of another's goodneſs is not to be regulated by the riches and worldly honours, of which he may be poſſeſſed. The true ſtate of things is often very different in itſelf from what appears to our outward ſenſes. They, who ſeem the happieſt in the opinion of a deluded world, are frequently miſerable within themſelves, and deſpicable in the ſight of God; and thoſe, whom the world deſpiſes and rejects as unworthy of its notice, God honours with his friendſhip, and ranks amongſt his Saints. Job lived long enough to ſee his character fully juſtified even in the opinion of a ſenſual world. In the latter part of his life, he was bleſt with health and riches in greater affluence, than he had ever enjoyed before. In thoſe darker ages of the world, ſuch viſible rewards ſeemed neceſſary for the encouragement of virtue; but ſince the ſon of God is become man, and has borne our pains, the enlightened Chriſtian raiſes his notions higher. Not by his ſenſes, but by faith he forms his judgment of the recompenſe, which is due to good and

and evil. Tho' left under the preſſure of ſufferings even to the end of life, he is neither ſtaggered in his faith, nor dejected in his hope. He conſiders only thoſe as real evils, which either ſully or deſtroy the life of the ſoul, which is ſanctifying grace, and ſets his heart on no other riches, than what are inviſible and eternal.

End of the fifth age.

Sixth

Sixth age of the world.

From the end of the Babylonian captivity 3468, to the birth of Jeſus Chriſt 4000; comprehending the ſpace of 532 years.

§ I. *Temple of Jeruſalem rebuilt.* 1 *Eſdras* 1.

A. M. 3468, *Before J. C.* 532. THE wrath of God againſt the Jewiſh people being appeaſed, and the term of their ſeventy years captivity being complete, Cyrus the glorious conqueror and monarch of the Eaſt, publiſhed an edict, by which he granted leave to all the Jewiſh nation to return into their own country, and rebuild the Temple. He likewiſe gave an order at the ſame time, that the ſacred veſſels, formerly brought thither by Nabuchodonoſor, ſhould be taken out of the royal treaſury of Babylon, and given back to be uſed in the divine ſervice, for which they were firſt deſigned. In conſequence of this edict, upwards of forty two thouſand Jews put themſelves upon their march back into Judea, under the conduct of Zorobabel, the ſon of Salathiel, and grandſon of king Joachin or Jechonias. Upon their arrival at Jeruſalem they erected a temporary altar for their daily ſacrifices, till the Temple, which they were preparing to rebuild, ſhould be finiſhed. Trees of cedar were brought from Libanus by the Tyrians and Sidonians, as Cyrus had ordered: maſons and hewers of ſtone were hired; Levites appointed to haſten on the work of the Lord, and the foundations of a new Temple laid with great ſolemnity and loud demonſtrations of joy. Veſted in their ſacerdotal attire the Prieſts ſtood with trumpets in their hands, and the Levites with cymbals,

cymbals ready to ſound the praiſes of Almighty God in hymns of jubilation and thankſgiving, according to the manner of David, king of Iſrael. While the maſons fixed the foundation ſtones, the Prieſts and Levites joined in a general chorus, which was heightened by the acclamations of crouding ſpectators. The younger people burſt out into peals of joy, whilſt the chief of the fathers and the ancients wept to ſee, how far the outlines of this new edifice fell ſhort of the old. The Samaritans, the ancient enemies of Juda and Benjamin, being informed, that the children of captivity were building a Temple to the Lord the God of Iſrael, addreſſed themſelves to Zorobabel and the ancients of Juda, that they alſo might be admitted as partners in the work; but their requeſt not being complied with, they did all they could, both by open force and ſecret intrigue in the court of Perſia, to interrupt the building and fruſtrate its deſign. Cyrus was not to be prevailed upon to alter the decree, which he had once publiſhed in favour of the Jewiſh people; but after his death, Cambyſes his ſon let himſelf be prevailed upon by the repeated ſlanders of the Samaritans ſo far, as to forbid the Jews to proceed any further, and a ſtop was put to the building, till the ſecond year of his ſucceſſor Darius Hyſtaſpes. This prince being diſabuſed of the calumnies, which had been thrown out againſt the Jewiſh people, and informed of the edict, which Cyrus had once given in their favour, ordered the building of the Temple to be reſumed; he even contributed towards the expence, and in the ſixth year of his reign, the Temple was entirely finiſhed, and dedicated with great ſolemnity. The Jews in Judea, having thus formed their re-eſtabliſhment, continued to ſtrengthen themſelves under the protection of the kings of Perſia, Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes. In the ſeventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes they were joined by a freſh body of their brethren from Babylon, under the conduct of Eſdras, a virtuous and learned Prieſt. Eſdras had made the law of God his peculiar ſtudy, and ſedulouſly conformed his practice to the ſanctity of its precepts. He went with full powers from Artaxerxes to viſit

viſit Judea and Jeruſalem, to carry the ſilver and gold, which the king and others had freely offered to the God of Iſrael, to deliver the holy veſſels, that were given him for the uſe of the Temple, to regulate the ſacrifices, and obſerve the rites of the God of Heaven, to appoint judges and magiſtrates, to puniſh vice and eſtabliſh good order in the republic. When Eſdras arrived at Jeruſalem, he found with great concern, that the firſt comers of the Jews had intermarried with the inhabitants of the country; he dreaded the conſequence of thoſe alliances, and therefore, after he had related to them his commiſſion from the king, had prayed and faſted for their ſin, and delivered the ſacred veſſels, which he had brought with him, to the miniſters of the Temple, he convened the people, and repreſented to them how contrary to the holy Law thoſe profane marriages were, and how neceſſary it was to break them off. The people were convinced by his diſcourſe, and with one accord ſolemnly promiſed to diſſolve the preſent and to make no future marriages with the idolaters of the land.

The connections formed between the Jews and thoſe pagan women are, according to the holy Fathers, a lively image of what is done by thoſe Chriſtians, who adopt ſuch maxims, and form ſuch connections in life, as are inconſiſtent with the ſacred promiſes, they made to God at baptiſm. And as the offspring of thoſe mixt marriages confounded the Hebrew language with that of Azotus and Moab, by uſing the words ſometimes of one and ſometimes of the other, ſo this motley ſort of Chriſtians ſeems willing to unite the ſpirit of Jeſus Chriſt and of the world together, wiſhing to obey them both, and to ſpeak the language both of the one and of the other. But as Eſdras convinced the Jews, that they could not remain the people of God, at the ſame time that they ſought an alliance with his enemies, ſo every Chriſtian muſt own the force of this Evangelical truth, that no one can ſerve two maſters at the ſame time; he cannot divide his heart between God and Mammon. God, who created the whole man, requires nothing leſs than his whole ſervice.

§ II.

§ II. *Queen Eſther. Eſth.* 4, 15.

WHILST a part of the Jewiſh people were re-eſtabliſhing themſelves in Judea, the remaining part in the provinces of Babylon ran great riſk of being totally deſtroyed. The mighty Aſſuerus, as he is called in the book of Eſther, and is thought to be the ſame perſon as Darius Hyſtaſpes, had a favorite courtier, whoſe name was Aman. Every mark of honour and royal favour was beſtowed upon this haughty man, to whom all the king's ſervants about court were commanded to bend the knee. The king's court was then at Suſan. Aman received that ſervile homage from every one excepting Mardochai the Jew. Mardochai was one of the captives, whom Nabuchodonoſor had carried away with king Jechonias to Babylon. This man, having diſtinguiſhed himſelf by the diſcovery of a plot, which two eunuchs had formed againſt the king's life, had an apartment appointed him in the palace, and the king made him preſents for the information he had given. Aman was exceedingly angry to ſee Mardochai refuſe him an homage, which the other chief ſervants of the king ſervilely paid him, and knowing him to be a Jew, reſolved that not only he, but his whole nation ſhould feel the weight of his reſentment. He took an opportunity of repreſenting to the king, that the Jews were an inſolent, lawleſs people, who by their religious tenets embroiled the ſtate, and diſturbed the peace of his ſubjects; that it was not ſafe to let them live, and that for the good of the empire they ought to be utterly extirpated. The credulous prince implicitly believed, what his favorite told him, and gave him full power to act, as he pleaſed, in that affair. Aman had all he wanted: he drew up an edict, to which he affixed the king's ſeal, & peremptorily commanded, That on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, every Jew throughout the Perſian dominions ſhould be maſſacred, without diſtinction of age or ſex. The pub- *A. M.* 3495. *Before J. C.* 505.

lication

lication of this cruel edict threw the Jews into the utmoſt conſternation; they ſaw no reſource but in God, whoſe mercy they implored by prayer and faſting. Through every town in the different provinces, where the order was publiſhed, great were the lamentations and cries of an oppreſſed people bemoaning their unhappy deſtiny.

Almighty God in his goodneſs had already provided for their ſafety, by the means of Eſther. This incomparable woman, who was niece to Mardochai, had ſucceeded to the place of queen Vaſthi. Vaſthi by an act of diſobedience had incurred the king's diſpleaſure, and was on that account divorced and depoſed from her royal dignity. After her divorce officers were ſent thro' the different provinces to ſeek for beautiful maidens and bring them to Suſan, that the king might chuſe one of them to be his queen inſtead of Vaſthi. Of the many fair rivals, who appeared, Eſther pleaſed him the moſt, and fixed his choice. The charms of her mind were ſtill more excellent, than thoſe of her beauty. She had from her tender years been educated by Mardochai, her father's brother, who after the death of her parents had adopted her for his daughter. With the ſame docility, as when ſhe was a little one, ſhe continued to reſpect his precepts, and to regulate her whole conduct by his advice. Her marriage with Aſſuerus was celebrated with a princely magnificence. The king ſet the royal crown upon her head, made her his queen, and honoured her with every mark of favour and diſtinction, which love and eſteem prompted him to beſtow upon the moſt amiable of women. He knew nothing of her family connections; for Mardochai had charged her to make no mention hitherto of her country and people. But as the day fixed for the execution of Aman's bloody edict was drawing near, he told her it was high time to declare herſelf, and to exert the influence ſhe had upon her royal conſort for the preſervation of her people. She humbly remonſtrated, that to go into the king's inner court without being ſent for was a capital offence, and to appear before him without his order would certainly be her death, except the king ſhould hold out his ſceptre to her

in

in token of clemency. Mardochai replied, that divine Providence had perhaps raiſed her to the crown, that ſhe might be ready to ſuccour her diſtreſſed brethren at this time; that when a whole nation was upon the edge of deſtruction, ſhe ought to think of ſaving other lives beſides her own; that if ſhe choſe notwithſtanding to be ſilent, God would employ other means for his people's ſafety, but that ſhe and her father's houſe ſhould periſh.

Eſther yielded to his reaſons, and reſigned herſelf to the will of heaven. She only deſired, that he and the other Jews in Suſan would join with her in prayer and faſting for three days, after which ſhe promiſed to go to the king and riſk her life for theirs. The three days were ſpent in acts of the moſt fervent devotion. On the third day Eſther put on her royal apparel, took two maids with her, and entered the king's apartment. With a mind full of anguiſh and fear, that lay hidden under the graces of a chearful countenance, ſhe paſſed thro' the doors in order, till ſhe came into the king's preſence. The king was ſeated upon his throne glittering with gold and precious ſtones: ſurpriſed at the unexpected appearance of his queen in that place, he gave her a look, which ſeemed to ſhow diſpleaſure. She ſunk down with fright, the colour left her cheeks; faint and pale, ſhe reſted her weary head upon her handmaid. God at that moment changed the king's ſpirit into mildneſs; he ſtarted from his throne, and ran in haſte to raiſe her up. He took her in his arms, till ſhe came to herſelf, and careſſed her with theſe words: What is the matter, Eſther? I am thy brother, fear not, thou ſhalt not die; the law was not made for thee; come near and touch the ſceptre. And as ſhe made no anſwer, he laid the golden ſceptre upon her neck, and kiſſed her, ſaying, Why doeſt thou not ſpeak to me? I ſaw thee, my Lord, as an Angel of God, ſaid ſhe, and my heart was troubled for fear of thy majeſty: for thou, my Lord, art admirable, and thy countenance is full of graces. And while ſhe was ſpeaking ſhe ſunk down, and was near fainting a ſecond time. The king was in great diſtreſs, his ſervants came round

to

to comfort her: he bade her ask whatever she pleased, and he would grant it, tho' it were one half of his kingdom. Esther only begged, that the king would please to come that day, and bring Aman with him to the banquet, which she had prepared for them. The king graciously consented, and sent immediately for Aman.

§ III. *Triumph of Mardochai. Esth. 6.*

A. M. 3495, *Before J. C.* 505. THE king went with Aman to Esther's banquet according to his promise, and being in the height of good humour pressed the queen to tell him, what request she had to make, promising her to grant, whatever she should ask. If I am thought worthy of the king's notice, said Esther, I only beg, that he will bring Aman with him again tomorrow, and I will then open my request to him. Aman went away in high spirits, and passing by the king's palace, saw Mardochai sitting at the gate. Mardochai took no notice of him, nor did he so much as move from his seat, or show him the least respect. Aman was exceedingly chagrined, returned home to meet his wife and friends, and opened to them the vexation of his soul. Tho' I am blessed with children, said he; tho' I flow with wealth; tho' I am honoured by the king, and preferably to all others invited to dine with the queen; yet I think it nothing, as long as I see Mardochai sitting before the king's gate. His wife and friends advised him to prepare a gallows for Mardochai, and solicit an order for his execution next morning, that so he might accompany the king with joy to the queen's banquet. The advice pleased him, and he ordered a gibbet fifty cubits high to be erected at his own door that afternoon. The king at night, not being able to sleep, commanded the annals of his reign to be brought, and read to him; and as they were reading, they came to that place, where it was written, how Mardochai had discovered the treason of Bagathan and Thares the eunuchs, who

who plotted the king's death: upon which Aſſuerus interrupted the lecture and aſked, what reward Mardochai had received for that important ſervice? It was anſwered, none at all. Aman was at that very hour ſtanding in the court, ready to prefer his requeſt againſt Mardochai, as ſoon as he could gain admittance. The king being told, that Aman was there, ordered him to come in, and immediately aſked him, what ought to be done to the man, whom the king was deſirous to honour. Aman, not imagining that royal honours could be intended for any one beſides himſelf, readily anſwered, that the happy man ought to be clothed with royal robes, to have the crown ſet upon his head, to be mounted upon the king's own horſe, and in that ſtate be conducted thro' the ſtreets by the firſt nobleman of his kingdom, who ſhould hold the bridle and proclaim aloud, as he went along, Thus ſhall the man be honoured, whom the king is pleaſed to honour. Go then, ſaid the king, and ſee that thou punctually perform every part of it to Mardochai the Jew. Aman had no choice: he durſt not reply, nor could he oppoſe the order, dictated by himſelf. Then, to the aſtoniſhment of all Suſan, did the humble Mardochai ſuddenly appear inveſted with the moſt ſplendid honours, that a Perſian monarch could beſtow upon a ſubject; whilſt the haughty Aman walked as an attendant, bowing and proclaiming the honours of a man, whom he had deſtined to the gallows, for not having bowed to him. Aman having performed this painful taſk, made haſte into his own houſe, ſwelling with vexation and covered with confuſion. He told his wife and friends what had befallen him; they had no comfort to give him, but expreſſed great apprehenſions of ſome more fatal ſtroke in reſerve. If Mardochai, ſaid they, be of the Jewiſh race, this is but the beginning of thy downfall; thou art too weak to ſtand againſt ſo powerful an adverſary; thou canſt not reſiſt, thou ſhalt fall in his ſight. Their words were in a few hours verified: as they were yet ſpeaking, the king's ſervants came to call him to the queen's banquet. In every circumſtance of this intereſting ſtory, it appears, how ſweetly, but how powerfully

God

God disposes all things to effect his designs, either for the punishment of the wicked or for the protection of the good.

§ IV. *Punishment of Aman. Esth.* 5.

A. M. 3495. *Before J. C.* 505. THE King and Aman went the second day to banquet with the queen; and when the king was warm with wine, he said, what is thy petition, Esther, that it may be given thee? Tho' thou ask the half of my kingdom, thou shalt have it. Then Esther, who by deferring to make her petition had made the king more eager to hear, and more earnest in his promise to grant it, laid aside the appearance she had hitherto put on of mirth and chearfulness, and in the mournful accents of a supplicant humbly begged, that if she had found favour in his eyes, the king would only please to suffer her and her people to enjoy the common light, which the malice of her enemies was ready to deprive them of. If we had been only sold for slaves, said she, and been permitted to drag out life in chains, I then should not have presumed to complain, but have bemoaned our fate in silence. But now, since we are destined to the slaughter, it is a cruelty, it is a disgrace, which rebounds upon the king himself. The king stood amazed, and being ignorant of the affair, asked what and whom she meant. The queen then pointing at Aman, said, He is the man, he is our enemy, who by an abuse of the royal favour he enjoys, has published an edict for the massacre of the whole Jewish people, whose only crime is their religion and fidelity to God. Assuerus, who had a fund of natural goodness, was shocked at the horrid scene, into which Aman's pride and his own credulity had almost betrayed him. His indignation rose, he left the room, and retired to a shady walk adjoining the palace. Conscious of his guilt, and apprehensive of the danger his life was in, Aman took that opportunity of the king's absence to throw himself at Esther's feet, as she lay reclined

clined upon her couch, and to implore her protection. The king came back into the room, and seeing Aman in that posture before the couch, exclaimed in wrath against the traitor, as guilty of offering violence to his queen, and sentenced him to death. An officer standing by mentioned the gibbet, that he had prepared for Mardochai the day before: hang Aman upon it, said the king: the order was instantly obeyed; and thus by a just judgment of God, the criminal suffered the very same punishment, which he had maliciously planned against the innocent.

To the great commendation of Assuerus, Saint Ambrose remarks, that this mighty monarch thought it no dishonour to acknowledge his mistake, as soon as he discovered it; he desisted from a measure, which he found to be unjust: he saw his easy temper had been wickedly imposed upon; that his friendship had been turned to the abuse of his authority, and his name employed to stain his honour with the effusion of innocent blood. He punished the guilty, as he deserved, and drew the innocent from the gulf of despair. In a second declaration, contradictory to that, which Aman had sent abroad, he made known the very great esteem he had of the Jewish nation, and promoted Mardochai to the same posts of honour, that Aman his enemy had enjoyed before. So truly verified was the sentence of our blessed Saviour, in which he has since declared, that every one, who exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself, shall be exalted.

§ V. *Walls of Jerusalem rebuilt.* 2 *Esd.* 2.

ASSUERUS, or as he is otherwise called Darius Hystaspes, left the crown of Persia to his son Xerxes, of whom the Scripture mentions nothing more than his name. Xerxes was succeeded by his son Artaxerxes, surnamed Longimanus, a great favourer and protector of the Jews. This prince in the seventh year of his reign, *A. M.* 3548, *Before J. C.* 452.

reign, as we have ſeen, ſent Eſdras to Jeruſalem, with full powers to eſtabliſh laws, and form the manners of the Jewiſh people. He employed the Jews in his own court, amongſt whom was a holy man called Nehemias, who ſerved him in the capacity of cup bearer. Nehemias is commended in the ſacred writings for his prayer and faſting, and the love of his country. For he was of Jewiſh extraction, and conſidered himſelf as an exile, driven by misfortunes from the country of his anceſtors. He omitted no opportunity of inquiring after his countrymen in Judea, and of informing himſelf of the true ſtate of their affairs. He had the comfort to learn, that by the zeal of Zorobabel and Eſdras, the republic there had aſſumed a regular form of government, that the Temple was rebuilt, and the obſervance of the Law enforced amongſt the people: but it grieved him beyond meaſure to hear of the ruinous condition, in which the walls of Jeruſalem ſtill lay. His charity made him lament the evils, which he wiſhed to ſee redreſſed, and a heavy gloom ſat upon his brow, which betrayed the ſadneſs of a troubled heart. The king, as he received the wine from his hand, obſerved his melancholy looks, and kindly aſked, what troubled him? How is it poſſible, my liege, replied the humble man, not to be ſad, while the ſepulchres of my forefathers, while the city of Jeruſalem is deſolate, and the gates thereof lie conſumed with fire? What is thy requeſt, ſaid the king? If it ſeem good to the king, anſwered Nehemiah, I beg it may be permitted me to viſit the city, where my forefathers lie interred, and to rebuild the walls thereof. He promiſed to return within a limited time, and upon that condition the king graciouſly granted him his requeſt, and diſmiſſed him with letters of recommendation to the governors of the country beyond the river, and particularly to Aſaph, the keeper of the royal foreſt, to furniſh him with timber, that he might cover the gates of the tower of the Temple. This was the twentieth year of Artaxerxes's reign, and from this epoch begins the date of Daniel's ſeventy weeks of years. Nehemias being come to Jeruſalem, took three days to review the broken walls

and

and ruins of the city, before he mentioned the design and grant he had to repair them. Then calling together the priests, magistrates, and nobles, he told them, how much he had felt, and how he grieved at their desolate and defenceless situation; encouraged them to rise and build up the walls of Jerusalem, and produced the royal license, which thro' the divine mercy he had obtained from Artaxerxes for that purpose. The joyful citizens immediately set all hands to work; they measured out the whole into different portions, which they undertook by companies; the heaps of rubbish were cleared away, every breach in the wall was closed, the gates and towers began to rise. The work was carried on with the greatest success and expedition, when the Samaritans, and other hostile neighbours of the Jewish nation, assembled to stop its progress. Nehemias then found it necessary to arm a part of the citizens, and to place a guard day and night to defend the workmen against the attacks of their enemies. By the redoubled efforts of human industry, to which the Almighty gave a blessing, the works were completed in less than two months, and Jerusalem again was girted round with walls and bulwarks.

Nehemias is an example of that active zeal, which ought to animate every Christian in his duty both to God and man. His undertaking to repair the holy city threw him into those circumstances, in which Saint Paul describes himself to have been, when he says, that he saw nothing but struggles from without, and alarms within. For while he had the open force of an armed enemy to repel from the walls, he was to defeat the secret artifices of a venal tribe, who were bribed to terrify the citizens with false predictions, and make them desist from their undertaking. Nehemias, by the sagacity of his genius, and the vigour of his resolution, triumphed over both. He taught the Jews how to use the trowel and the sword together, and in his whole conduct so happily united the virtues of fortitude and prudence, as to appear neither too bold on one hand, nor too timid on the other.

§ VI.

§ VI. *Chaſtiſement of Heliodorus.* 2 *Mac.* 3.

A. M. 3828, *Before J. C.* 172. JERUSALEM being in ſome ſort reſtored to its ancient ſplendor, the Jews from that time enjoyed a long and proſperous peace with the free exerciſe of their religion under the kings of Perſia, till an end was put to that empire by Alexander the Great. This renowned conqueror of the Eaſt had been figuratively ſhown to the Prophet Daniel in two different viſions, firſt under the appearance of a winged leopard with four heads, and then under the appearance of a goat with four horns; by which emblematical figures not only his rapid conqueſts, and great power are expreſſed, but the diviſion alſo of his empire into four kingdoms, which ſprung up under as many of his captains, to whom he parcelled out his extenſive territories. This prince died about the year of the world 3680, and in the partition of his conqueſts the kingdom of Aſia fell to the ſhare of Seleucus, under whom and his ſucceſſors Judea continued to enjoy their full liberty, till the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, whom Daniel in the eighth chapter ſeems to point out for his cruel perſecution of the Jews, and profanation of the holy Temple. The general peace had indeed ſuffered ſome interruption under Seleucus Philopator, his brother, and predeceſſor in the throne of Syria.

Philopator had a great eſteem of Onias the High-prieſt on account of his ſingular piety, and, altho' an idolater, furniſhed an annual revenue to provide victims for ſacrifice to the living God. But upon the information of one Simon, who had been made overſeer of the Temple, that great ſums of money were depoſited in the treaſury over and above what were neceſſary for the ſacrifices, he ſent Heliodorus his commiſſary with orders to fetch them away. Heliodorus upon his arrival ſignified the king's orders to Onias the High-prieſt. Onias told him, that the monies in queſtion had been depoſited in his hands for the benefit of poor widows and orphans, that he was but the adminiſtrator of them, and could

not

not deliver them up. Heliodorus replied, that it was not in his commiſſion to examine how and for what purpoſes thoſe monies had been there depoſited, but to carry them to his maſter. The whole city upon this was flung into the greateſt conſternation; the people with Onias at their head fled for refuge to the throne of God, whom they beſought with ardent prayers, that he would defend them againſt all violence and not ſuffer his ſanctuary to be plundered of its treaſures. Their petition was heard. Heliodorus advanced as far as the entrance of the Temple fully determined to ſeize by force, what he could not obtain without it. The ſoldiers, who accompanied him, were by the power of God ſuddenly ſtruck with dread, which caſt them to the ground, and deterred them from executing their leader's commands. For there appeared to them a man on horſeback, clad in golden armour, and the horſe, on which he ſat, reared and violently ſtruck his fore feet againſt Heliodorus, while two comely young men in rich attire ſtanding on either ſide ſcourged him inceſſantly with rods, that they had in their hands. Helidorus dropt down ſpeechleſs upon the ground, where he lay, till he was taken up, and carried off in a ſedan chair. His friends immediately addreſſed themſelves to the good Onias, humbly begging, that he would call upon the Moſt-high to grant life to the man, who was ſeemingly in the agony of death. Onias being apprehenſive, leſt the fact might be miſrepreſented, and the miraculous effect of God's power be conſtrued into treaſon againſt the king, conſented to their requeſt, and by his prayers ſaved Heliodorus from death. The two heavenly young men, ſtill ſtanding by the ſide of Heliodorus, ſaid to him; Return thanks to the prieſt Onias, for on his account our Lord hath granted thee life; and ſince thou haſt received this viſible chaſtiſement from God, declare to all men the great and wonderful works of his divine power; having ſaid this, they both diſappeared. Heliodorus joyfully fulfilled the injunctions, that were laid upon him, and returned to Seleucus. Seleucus was unwilling to renounce his claim to the ſacred

cred treaſures, and adviſed with him about ſending ſome other perſon to fetch them away; upon which Heliodorus frankly declared, that if he had any enemy or traitor in his kingdom, whoſe death or puniſhment he wiſhed, he might ſend him thither, where the power of God undoubtedly reſided for the chaſtiſement of all, who ſhould preſume to approach the holy place with a deſign of doing evil to it.

§ VII. *Signs in the Heavens over Jeruſalem.* 2 *Mach.* 5.

A. M. 3834, *Before J. C.* 166. UPON the death of Seleucus, his brother Antiochus, ſurnamed Epiphanes or the Noble, took poſſeſſion of the throne. This man was the ſon of Antiochus the Great, and became a barbarous perſecutor of the Jewiſh nation. He ſeems to have been raiſed to pour out vengeance upon a ſinful and perverſe people. The good Onias was poſſeſſed of too many virtues to remain unmoleſted in a city, where the principles of ambition and venality publicly prevailed. He had a wicked brother called Jaſon, who graſping at power, ſubverted him in the dignity of the Prieſthood. Jaſon became High-prieſt by dint of money in the room of Onias, and by an additional ſum obtained the king's licenſe to erect a ſchool, in which the Jewiſh youths were inſtructed in the manners and vices of the gentiles, and trained up to the games and exerciſes of the heathen heroes. This wicked man had not long enjoyed his ill-gotten power, before he found a rival in Menelaus the brother of Simon, who had been the firſt promotor of Heliodorus's attempt upon the treaſures of the Temple. Menelaus of the tribe of Benjamin, and therefore diſqualified for the prieſthood, ſupplanted Jaſon by the ſame evil practices, which Jaſon himſelf had ſo ſucceſsfully employed againſt Onias. For honours and dignities even the moſt ſacred were then beſtowed upon the worſt of men, as they had money to purchaſe them. To ſupply himſelf with the ſums, he wanted, Menelaus had ſeized upon,

upon, and ſold ſome of the rich veſſels belonging to the Temple. Such profanations afflicted the holy Onias, who was ſtill permitted to live: from his private retreat at Antioch he reprimanded Menelaus for his ſacrilegious impiety, and therefore fell a victim to his revenge. The death of the holy prieſt was lamented by all good men, and honoured with the tears of Antiochus himſelf. Onias was honoured by a king, from whom he had received the greateſt injuſtices, while Menelaus was undermined by thoſe, whom he thought his faſteſt friends. He was turned out of his poſt of honour by the intrigues of Lyſimachus his brother, and only recovered it again by force of bribery. Thus was the Jewiſh republic miſerably torn into factions; thus was order baniſhed from the ſtate; the prieſts no longer attended to the ſervice of the altar, things ſacred and profane were confounded together, no attention paid to the laws either human or divine: Jeruſalem was polluted with the blood of her own citizens, and dreadful times came on, which ſeem to have been foreboded by the tremendous ſigns, which for forty days were ſeen over the holy city. There was the appearance of ſoldiers glittering in golden armour; a multitude of men was ſeen in helmets with drawn ſwords, troops of horſemen moving to and fro through the air, ſhaking their ſhields and encountering one againſt another. Such unuſual ſigns filled the minds of men with dreadful alarms, and all moſt earneſtly prayed, that theſe prodigies might turn to good. In that general conſternation of the people, Jaſon thought it a fair opportunity of recovering his former dignity; he was moreover encouraged to that undertaking by a report, which prevailed of Antiochus's death in Egypt; he therefore entered the city with an armed body of men, and glutted himſelf with the blood of his fellow citizens. But he carried not the point he aimed at. For Antiochus had been ſucceſsful in his expedition againſt Egypt, till the Romans interrupted him in his conqueſts, which drove him to wreak his indignation on the Jewiſh people. He marched an army to Jeruſalem, with a view of reducing it entirely to his obedience. The dif-

ferent

ferent factions of the citizens, tearing one another into pieces, gave him an eaſy conqueſt; he took the city by ſtorm, and, as he was cruel by nature, and grown inſolent with ſucceſs, deluged the ſtreets with human blood. In the ſpace of three days, that his fury raged without giving any quarter to man, woman or child, there were four ſcore thouſand of the people maſſacred, forty thouſand made priſoners & as many ſold for ſlaves. Menelaus led the king into the temple, from whence with impious hands he took the ſanctified veſſels, and rifled the holy treaſury: and tho' he added blaſphemy to ſacrilege in contempt of the living God, no ſuch judgment befell him, as had befallen Heliodorus. For the ſins of the people had at that time provoked almighty God to chaſtiſe them by the hands of their enemies, and they had no Onias to intercede in their behalf. The anger of almighty God never appears ſo terrible, as when he ſuffers his enemies to domineer within the Sanctuary, and profane his very altar. For no holineſs of the place can give a ſanction to the ſinfulneſs of its inhabitants, and no ſanctuary ſhall ſcreen them from the vengance, which their ſins deſerve.

§ VIII. *Martyrdom of Eleazar. 2 Mac. 6.*

A. M. 3837. *Before J. C.* 163. ANTIOCHUS, having made himſelf maſter of Jeruſalem, raged with all the fury of a tyrant againſt its miſerable inhabitants. He appointed governors more cruel than himſelf, who plundered and afflicted the people in his abſence, and at the end of two years ſent Apollonius with a great army to ſlay all the men, who had attained the age of manhood, and to ſell the younger ſort with the women for ſlaves. The view of Antiochus was to deſtroy the race, and extirpate the religion of the Jewiſh people. Not long after he ſent another of his generals from Antioch to compel the Jews to depart from the laws of their forefathers and of God. Then was the holy Temple defiled with all ſorts of revellings and

and impurities, a ſtatue of Jupiter Olympius was erected therein, men were dragged by the king's officers to offer ſacrifice to the heathen idols, and orders given for every one to be put to death, who ſhould refuſe to follow the pagan rites. Then was miſery to be ſeen. Two women for having circumciſed their children were publickly led through the city with their infants hanging at their breaſts, and caſt down headlong from the walls, while others were burnt alive in caves, where they had aſſembled to keep the Sabbath. Such cruelties ſo terrified the generality of the people, that ſcarce any one had the courage to profeſs himſelf a Jew. Many however, when publicly called upon to declare their ſentiments, bravely ſtood the ſevere trial, and ended their lives by martyrdom. Amongſt theſe glorious champions was Eleazar a chief Scribe, whoſe piety and grey hairs rendered him truly venerable. Being apprehended by the king's officers, and in contempt of the law being violently preſſed to eat ſwine's fleſh, which they thruſt into his mouth, he vigorouſly reſiſted, and preferred a glorious death to the diſhonourable terms of life. He went on chearfully towards the place of execution, when they, who accompanied him, being moved with compaſſion and reſpect for his age, took him aſide, and begged he would conſent to let ſome legal meats be ſet before him, that by eating of them at leaſt he might ſeem to comply with the king's order, which would be enough to ſave his life. The venerable old man was not to be impoſed upon by ſuch pretexts of friendſhip. He conſidered the unblemiſhed character, he had hitherto maintained thro' life, the teſtimony he owed to truth, and the reſpect due to the law of God in thoſe particular circumſtances, and rejected their propoſal with a nobleneſs of ſoul, that was natural to him. I would rather die, ſaid he, than do, what you counſel me. Such diſſimulation becomes not theſe grey hairs. God forbid that I ſhould ever ſully the purity of my former life by ſuch a ſtain, and thereby give occaſion for the young men to imagine, that Eleazar, at the age of four ſcore and ten, has renounced the religion of his foreſathers,

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and conſented to the ſuperſtitions of the Pagans. Miſerable ſhould I be indeed, if the poor remains of declining life could tempt me to prevaricate in ſo ſhameful a manner. For altho' I were to eſcape the judgments of men for the preſent, yet neither alive nor dead ſhall I eſcape the hand of the Almighty. It is therefore better for me to die courageouſly at once, than by a diſgraceful compliance appear unworthy of my old age: ſo by example I ſhall teach my fellow citizens, that the laws of God are to be preferred to thoſe of men, that the duties of religion are to take place of worldly intereſt, and even of life itſelf. This noble and generous anſwer was attributed to a ſtubborn pride by his pretended friends, who thereupon turned their profeſſions of kindneſs into injuries. Eleazar was forthwith carried to the place of execution, where by a glorious death he left not to the young men only, but to the whole nation, an example of the moſt heroic fortitude. By his conduct he teaches us, with what caution we are to avoid, whatever may be a ſubject of ſcandal to the weak, and in what manner we are to give glory to God by a ſincere confeſſion of the truth.

§ IX. *Martyrdom of the Machabees.* 2 *Mac.* 7.

A. M. 3837. *Before J. C.* 163. THE venerable Eleazar was ſoon after followed by a youthful band, who ſignalized their courage by a much ſeverer conflict. They were ſeven brothers, commonly known by the name of the Machabees. Antiochus himſelf preſided at their martyrdom, and being enraged to ſee ſuch conſtancy in an age ſo tender, he ſtretched every nerve to terrify and torture them into a compliance with his impious demands. He condemned them all to undergo the ſame torments one after another, that the ſufferings of the foregoing might intimidate the next. The eldeſt was firſt called out, in the preſence of his mother and the reſt of his brethren, to enter upon the bloody combat. The executioner cut out his tongue, chopped off

off the extremities of his hands and feet, drew off the ſkin of his head, and then caſt the mangled body into a large frying pan, where the remains of agonizing life were conſumed by a ſlow fire. The firſt being thus barbarouſly ſlain, the ſecond and the reſt were ſucceſſively tormented and ſlain in the ſame manner. Each advanced in his turn, each with the ſame manly fortitude bore the tyrant's tortures, and each with the ſame ſteady perſeverance triumphed over his ſavage inhumanity. They adored the decrees of God, who was pleaſed to make this trial of their faith; they readily ſubmitted to the torments in puniſhment of their ſins; they cheerfully reſigned a life, which they hoped to receive one day again by a glorious reſurrection. And as if the ſight of ſufferings had inſpired them with freſh courage, they told the tyrant, that he was not to fancy them abandoned by their God; that it was impious folly in him thus to fight againſt the Almighty; that he was but a paſſing ſcourge in the Almighty's hand, and would himſelf ſoon feel the vengeance already prepared for his chaſtiſement. Antiochus would willingly have pardoned them their reproaches, if he could but have got the better of their fortitude. Six of the brothers had glorioufly conquered by their death; the ſeventh only remained, the youngeſt of them all, and him the tyrant hoped to gain by careſſes and fair promiſes. He promiſed him his friendſhip, wealth and happineſs, if he would only abjure the laws of his forefathers; and when he perceived that his words made no impreſſion, he called the mother, and deſired her, if ſhe had any fondneſs left for an only ſurviving ſon, to diſabuſe him of his error, and by her advice preſerve his life. The incomparable woman, who to a mother's tenderneſs joined a manly fortitude of mind, deſpiſed the tyrant's ſolicitations, and in deriſion promiſed, that ſhe would adviſe her ſon, ſince he deſired it. Wherefore, bending towards the amiable young man, ſhe exhorted him in her native tongue, that he would have pity on her, who had borne him nine months in her womb, who had ſuckled and brought him up

up to that age, that he would not fear the tormentor, but look up to God, the creator of heaven and earth, and of all things in them; and that he would courageouſly follow the glorious example of his brethren, that ſo by the divine mercy ſhe might be worthy to receive them all again in life eternal. Animated with freſh reſolution, the young man interrupted his mother, as ſhe was yet ſpeaking, and called upon his executioners to renew the combat. Why do you heſitate, ſaid he; for whom do you ſtay? Behold me fixed in the reſolution of obeying the law, nor will I diſobey God, to obey the king. The tyrant foamed with rage to ſee himſelf thus mocked and defeated: with fiercer barbarity, than he had ſhown againſt the other ſix brothers, he diſcharged his fury upon the ſeventh, and tortured him to death. The illuſtrious mother, having nothing more to fear for her ſons, followed them with redoubled vigour in their victorious career, and with them laid down her life, on the ſame day, in the ſame glorious cauſe.

The holy Fathers are diffuſely eloquent in their encomiums of this incomparable woman. From her, as from the ſource under God, was derived that ſtow of virtuous magnanimity, which ſo diſtinguiſhed her ſons. With a more than manly firmneſs, ſhe beheld them in their fiery conflict, ſhe encouraged them in their torments, ſhe exhorted them to die. Thoſe endearing arts and careſſes, which many mothers often miſapply to other purpoſes, were by her made uſe of ſolely for the real advantage of her children. The tender feelings of a mother were by the activity of her faith directed beyond the enjoyment of preſent happineſs; her deſire was to ſee them in that bleſt abode, where ſhe might receive them again without the fear of loſing them for evermore. By her example ſhe teaches Chriſtian parents, what ſentiments of piety, what principles of religion they ought to inſpire into their children; and in what manner, when called upon, they are to give thoſe to God, whom they have received from God. For whether they live, or whether they die, they ſolely belong to God: as long as they live, they ſhould live to God, and when they die, they ought

ought to be reſignedly parted with, as a precious pledge that can be no longer kept, than is agreeable to the divine will.

§ X. *Generoſity of Mathathias.* 1 *Mac.* 2.

DURING the ſcene of deſolation, which ſtained the land of Juda with the blood of its beſt citizens, Mathathias, a valiant and religious man of the ſacerdotal race, retreated with his family into Modin, a ſmall town ſituated upon a hill, the former reſidence of his anceſtors; there with the deepeſt anguiſh he conſidered over, and bewailed the misfortunes of his country. Why have I been born, ſaid he, to ſee this affliction of my people, this deſolation of the holy city? She is fallen a prey to her enemies; her temple is profaned, her treaſures plundered, the veſſels of her glory in the hands of foreigners, her beauty and ancient ſplendor is extinguiſhed, the ſpoils of Sion are carried off to enrich the barbarous nations of the earth. Full of theſe melancholy reflections, Mathathias ſat mourning over his country, covered with ſackcloth, and bathed in tears. Many other Jews had alſo taken refuge at Modin, but were not long ſuffered to remain unmoleſted: for the king's deputies purſued them thither, and inſiſted on their abandoning the law of God, and ſacrificing to idols. Mathathias had the grief to ſee many of his countrymen yield to the fear of ſuffering, and apoſtatiſe from the religion of their forefathers. The king's officers uſed every argument to perſuade him into a compliance with the edict; they made him offers of money, honours, and preferment, which he rejected with a generous diſdain, and publicly declared, That tho' all nations ſhould conſent to obey Antiochus, and every man of the Jewiſh people ſhould depart from the faith of their fathers, yet neither he, nor his brethren, nor his ſons, would pay obedience to an edict, that was incompatible with the law of God. As he ſpoke theſe words, there came a Jew in the ſight of all

A. M. 3837, *Before J. C.* 163.

to offer ſacrifice upon the altar, which was there erected to Antiochus's idol. Mathathias ſaw and was grieved, his reins trembled, and his wrath was kindled according to the judgment of the Law. *Deut.* 13. With a zeal, like to that of Phinees, he ſlew not only the Jew, who was offering idolatrous ſacrifice, but alſo the officer, who had compelled him to it, and immediately left the town, ſummoning his fellow-citizens, who had any zeal for religion, to follow him into the deſert. His five valiant ſons, John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan, were the chief, who followed him: they retreated to the mountains, where they endeavoured to ſhelter themſelves from perſecution, till being joined by the moſt courageous and zealous of the people, their numbers ſwelled into an army, ſtrong enough to face their enemies in the field. Mathathias led them on againſt the king's troops, whom he forced to retreat before him, and to fly for ſafety beyond the boundaries of Judea. He ſcoured the whole country, as he marched along with his victorious followers, overturned the profane altars, that he met with, and reſtored to the inhabitants the free exerciſe of their religion. But death cut him ſhort, before he had time to finiſh, what he had ſo proſperouſly begun. Before he expired, he called his ſons to him, and in this manner expreſſed to them the noble ſentiments of his ſoul: Now it is, that the anger of the Lord lies heavy upon his people; the proud domineer, and threaten our nation with ruin. You therefore, O my ſons, arm yourſelves with zeal for God's law, and be ye ready to die in its defence. Call to mind the glorious actions of your forefathers, and let their example ſpur you on in the purſuit of glory. Joſeph in ſpite of his brothers envy became the lord of Egypt; David triumphed over the perſecutions of Saul; Ananias, Azarias, and Miſael, were delivered from the fiery furnace, and Daniel from the lions den. Thus thro' every age it appears, that God never abandons thoſe, who place their confidence in him. Therefore fear ye not the violence of a ſinful man, who notwithſtanding the preſent blaze of glory, that ſurrounds him, is no more than duſt, and a worm

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of the earth. He glories in his might to day, and to-morrow he ſhall be no more: for he ſhall again return into the duſt, from whence he was firſt taken, and his vain conceits ſhall periſh with him. Such were the laſt ſentiments of Mathathias, by which he endeavoured to infuſe into the breaſts of his gallant ſons the ſame holy zeal, that burnt in his own. He gave them his bleſſing, and was laid to his forefathers, in the town of Modin.

§ XI. *Judas Machabeus.* 1 *Mac.* 3.

MATHATHIAS in the laſt inſtructions, that he gave his ſons, had ſingled out Simon for his prudence, and Judas for his warlike valour; he had recommended to them, that the firſt ſhould aid them by his counſels, and the ſecond ſhould command the army. Void of jealouſy and only zealous for the public good, they religiouſly complied with their father's will. Judas, ſurnamed Machabeus, in accepting of the command, promiſed his brethren, that he would do his beſt to anſwer the good opinion, which his father had been pleaſed to expreſs of him, and to diſcharge the truſt, which they had conſented to repoſe in him. Eager to compleat what his father had but juſt begun, he girted himſelf for battle, like a giant, ſays the ſacred hiſtorian, and buckled on his ſword, which was a ſhield to the whole army. He ruſhed to war, and in his acts was like a lion, and like a lion's whelp roaring for his prey. In forming his army he made choice of thoſe men only, who had never bent their knees to the idols of Antiochus. For he relied chiefly upon God for victory, and religiouſly concluded, that a wicked multitude would be more likely to draw down a curſe upon his arms, than help him to conquer. He therefore collected thoſe together, whom the dread of torments had diſperſed; with thoſe he formed a body of ſix thouſand choſen men, and with thoſe he thought himſelf a match for all the forces, that the Syrians could bring againſt him His ſtudy was to infuſe his own ſentiments *A. M.* 3838, *Before J. C.* 162.

ſentiments into the minds of his ſoldiers, and to inſpire them with the ſame confidence in God. He repreſented to them, that God alone is the Lord of hoſts; that on him alone they were to rely for ſucceſs; that by prayer and faſting they muſt render him propitious to their arms; that under his all-powerful protection they had nothing to fear from the thouſands of a pagan enemy; for that God alone held the balance of victory, and could turn the ſcale as eaſily in favour of a ſmall, as of a greater number. Thus Jonathan the ſon of Saul routed the camp of the Philiſtines; thus Ezechias was delivered from the army of Sennacherib. Nor did he doubt, but the Almighty had the like mercy ſtill in ſtore for them; that the cries of the afflicted, that the blood of the innocent, that the prayers of the penitent, would diſarm his divine juſtice againſt Juda, and turn his vengeance upon the inſolent foe, who had defiled the Temple with idols, and Jeruſalem with blood. And to make his followers ſtill more reſolute and united in their undertaking, he ordered it to be proclaimed through the camp, that all they, who were afraid of facing the enemy, or who had any private intereſt to purſue, or domeſtic buſineſs to call them home, ſhould inſtantly retire, and leave him with the reſt to conquer for their religion and country.

Thus did Judas Machabeus prepare himſelf to fight the battles of the Lord; thus did he ſpirit up his followers to feats of glory, and teach them, how they were to conquer. The zeal, the piety, the faith, and reſolution of this Hebrew chief well deſerves the notice of all Chriſtians, who have a much more important undertaking upon their hands. The life of man, ſays holy Job, is a warfare upon earth. We have our ſouls to ſave, we have heaven to gain; and heaven can be gained only by thoſe, who are eager and vigorous in the purſuit. The ſtrong united powers of the world, the fleſh and devil ſurround us on every ſide and oppoſe our progreſs. With them there is no peace to be expected, we muſt fight, we muſt ſtrive and conquer too, before we can be crowned. For this we muſt be equipped with the

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ſpiritual armour of God, without whom we can do nothing. Unable of ourſelves to advance a ſingle ſtep, we muſt endeavour by humble prayer to obtain from Jeſus Chriſt thoſe ſuccours of his holy grace, which alone can invigorate our efforts, and render them ſucceſsful.

§ XII. *Victories of Judas Macchabeus.* 1 *Mac.* 4.

JUDAS MACHABEUS, having prepared himſelf for war in the manner, we have ſaid, directed his firſt attack againſt Apollonius, who commanded a great army of infidels in Samaria. He gained a complete victory, ſlew Apollonius with his own hand, and ſtript him of his ſword, which he ever after uſed in battle, as long as he lived. For from this time Judas was in perpetual war with the Syrians, nor was it by the death of one general, or by the overthrow of one army, that the Syrian power could be broken. Upon the death of Apollonius Seron took the field with a numerous army, not doubting of ſucceſs, and promiſing himſelf great honour from the defeat of a general, whoſe name was become the talk of foreign nations. Seron's boaſting promiſes of victory ended in a total overthrow, which covered him with confuſion, and crowned his adverſary with new glory. The news of theſe two battles fired Antiochus with a freſh deſire of revenge; the diſgrace, that had fallen upon his arms, made him eager to waſh it out. Tho' he drained his treaſury of money, and his kingdom of men, he reſolved to ſet on foot another army, which ſhould defy every attempt, and baffle every power, that Judas could bring againſt it. The ſtate of affairs requiring the king's preſence in Perſia, Lyſias, the viceroy of Syria, was intruſted with the management of this expedition againſt Judea. An army of forty thouſand foot, and ſeven thouſand horſe, under the command of Ptolemy, Nicanor and Gorgias, three of his moſt able generals, marched into the Jewiſh territories. The ſight of ſo formidable an army ſtruck a panic into the deſponding Jews. Judas *A. M.* 3838, *Before J. C.* 162.

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ſaw the evils, that were pouring in upon him, and exerted his abilities to repel them. By word and example he animated his troops againſt an enemy, who had nothing to truſt to but their numbers and weapons, whilſt they the choſen people of God had all the heavenly hoſt to defend them. He admoniſhed them to prepare for battle by prayer and faſting, he reminded them of the wonderful protection, God had ſhown their forefathers in ancient times, and how glorious it was to fight for the ſacred laws of God and the liberties of their country. Having thus diſpelled their fears, and warmed their courage for battle, he led them on againſt the Syrians, whom he charged with ſuch intrepidity, that he broke and routed their whole army. This ſtroke reduced Lyſias almoſt to deſpair; he was afraid the miſcarriage of the war might be attributed to his neglect, and therefore reſolved to command the next campaign in perſon. He drew together all the recruits he could during winter, and in ſpring led an army of ſixty thouſand foot and five thouſand horſe into the heart of Judea. Judas was there ready to receive him, gave him battle, defeated, and forced him to retreat with great loſs to Antioch.

Judas, having no enemy upon his hands, turned his thoughts upon repairing the devaſtations, which the Gentiles had made in the country. His firſt object was the houſe of God: for he was afflicted to ſee the ſanctuary deſolate, the altar profaned, the gates burnt, and in the court ſhrubs grown up, as in a foreſt. He began by appointing Prieſts of an unblemiſhed character for the performance of the ſacrifices, he cleanſed the holy places and the courts, threw down the altar, on which the idol of Jupiter had ſtood, and built a new one, which was dedicated with great joy and religious feſtivity. Then were the ſacred veils hung up again, the holy veſſels renewed, the golden candleſtick, the altar of perfumes, the table of ſhow-bread reſtored to their places, and every other thing provided for the divine ſervice.

Thus did Judas paſs the winter months, till the ſervice of his country called him forth again into the field. The neighbouring nations had taken offence at his repairing

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the Temple, and conſpired the deſtruction of his people. The Idumeans, the Amorrheans, and Ammonites, roſe in arms againſt him, and great forces appeared in the field on the ſide of Galilee, in Galaad and beyond the Jordan. Judas with a rapidity of ſucceſs, which diſtinguiſhed him for a favorite of heaven, choſen to fight and conquer for the defence of Iſrael, ſcoured the whole country, and diſcomfited his enemies, wherever he met them. He ſtormed their fortreſſes, reduced their cities, and frequently routed their numerous armies without loſing ſo much as a ſingle man. For the Lord of hoſts was with him, and holy Angels viſibly protected him more than once in battle.

In an attack, he made upon Gorgias the governor of Idumea, ſome of his ſoldiers fell, becauſe they had forfeited the divine protection: for when he came to bury them, he found under their clothes ſome pagan donaries, which they had taken contrary to the law at the ſacking of Jamnia. 2 *Mac.* c. 12. The religious chief was grieved at the ſin his men had been guilty of, but ſtill hoping that they might find mercy on account of the piety they had ſhown in dying for their country and religion, made a collection of twelve thouſand drachms of ſilver, which he ſent to Jeruſalem, that prayer and ſacrifice might be offered for them. Holy therefore, ſays the ſacred text, and ſalutary is the thought of praying for the dead, that they may be looſed from their ſins. For to ſins already remitted, as the Fathers unanimouſly teach, and it appears in Nathan's ſpeech to king David, 2 *Kings*, 12. a temporal puniſhment is ſometimes reſerved, and from that puniſhment Judas hoped by prayer and ſacrifice to releaſe his deceaſed friends and fellow warriors.

§ XIII.

§ XIII. *Death of Antiochus.* 1 *Mac.* 6.

A. M. 3841, *Before J. C.* 159. DURING theſe tranſactions in Judea Antiochus had undertaken an expedition againſt Elimais, a rich and ſtrong city in Perſia. The inhabitants, knowing that nothing but the deſire of plunder had invited the king to attack them, defended themſelves with great reſolution, and forced him to make a precipitate retreat into the province of Babylon. Here covered with confuſion at his diſgrace, he was informed of the bad fortune, which had likewiſe attended his arms in Judea. Vexed with rage and ſickening with grief to ſee himſelf thus baffled in his projects, he vowed revenge againſt the people, who had thrown ſuch diſhonour on him, publickly declaring, that he would reduce Jeruſalem to a heap of ruins, and make it a common burying-place of the whole Jewiſh nation. But God, who ſees the heart, and knows how to check the pride of man, ſtruck him with an incurable and painful plague in his bowels, which ſoon reduced him to the grave. He however mounted his chariot, and breathing revenge againſt the Jews, ordered his ſervants to drive him on with the utmoſt expedition. The arm of God ſtopped him ſhort in his career. Being thrown from his chariot he was bruiſed in a terrible manner, and being no longer able to bear the motion of a carriage, he ordered himſelf to be put into a litter not to interrupt his journey. Thus the king, who was repleniſhed with pride above the meaſure of man, ſays the holy ſcripture, who to himſelf ſeemed to rule even the waves of the ſea, and to weigh the heights of the mountains in a balance, was in a moment humbled by the manifeſt power of God, which ſtruck him to the ground. Loathſome worms ſwarmed out of every part of his body, the ſtench of which became inſupportable to his attendants, to himſelf and the whole army. For his fleſh rotted and dropped from his bones,

bones, while his bowels were tortured with exquiſite pains in punishment of the cruelties, with which he had ſo unmercifully racked the bowels of others. The growing tortures of his body, joined to the vexation of his mind, rendered his ſituation every hour more and more lamentable. He then began to reflect within himſelf and to confeſs his great miſery. The remembrance of the evils, which he had done in the holy city of Jeruſalem, added keen remorſe of conſcience to his other pains; he acknowledged the juſtice of the ſtroke, that laid him thus low. It is juſt, ſaid he, to ſubmit to God; nor is it for mortal man to equal himſelf to God. Then, as if he had ſome glimmering hope of ſoftening the rigour of divine juſtice into mercy, he promiſed Almighty God, that he would treat Judea with clemency equal to his former ſeverity, that he would make the city free, and put her citizens upon the ſame footing with thoſe of Athens: he promiſed to furniſh the holy Temple with every neceſſary expenſe for the ſacrifices, to make himſelf a Jew, and in every part of the earth to proclaim the power of God. All this he promiſed by word of mouth, and wrote moreover a letter to the Jewiſh nation full of ſeeming friendſhip and eſteem. But the juſt judgment of God was come upon him, ſays the ſacred text; deſpairing of life, Antiochus prayed to the Lord, from whom he was not like to obtain mercy, and thus ended a wicked and miſerable life by a more miſerable death.

Such was the exit of Antiochus the Noble. The ſhow he made of a death-bed repentance, proves both the deceitfulneſs and inefficacy of a ſorrow, which is extorted only by pain, and comes not from the heart. Repentance deferred to the laſt hour, tho' accompanied with all the verbal proteſtations of Antiochus, is not to be relied upon. A Chriſtian, who by deliberate neglect throws himſelf into that extremity, has no better grounds for his hope of pardon, than had that reprobate king. The grace of dying well is in the common courſe of providence granted to thoſe only, who by a virtuous life endeavour to obtain it. The ſentence of Saint Auſtin upon

on this ſubject deſerves our notice. Do you deſire to die well, ſays he? You then muſt live well: for whoever leads a good life cannot meet with a bad death. A good death is the recompenſe of a good life.

§. XIV. *Courage of Eleazar.* 1 *Mac.* 6.

A. M. 3841, *Before J. C.* 159. THE death of Antiochus Epiphanes ended not the war, nor the calamities of the Jewiſh people. The Syrian generals ſtill ſtrove to ſubdue the country for their new king Antiochus Eupator, who ſucceeded his father, both in his crown and antipathy againſt the Jews. Judas Machabeus headed his victorious troops againſt them, and in different battles vanquiſhed Georgias, Timotheus and Lyſias. Humbled by his defeat, Lyſias became an advocate for peace, and a truce was agreed on between the king and Judas Machabeus: but no laſting peace could be expected, where traitors among the Jews themſelves were ready to ſell their country to the common enemy. Men jealous of the power and envious of the glory, which Judas had ſo juſtly acquired in the field, invited Antiochus to come to their aſſiſtance, and to deliver them from the tyranny of a man, who overawed his fellow citizens, and hindered them from ſubmitting to the kings of Syria. Antiochus upon that information called together his friends and the captains of his army, raiſed all the men he could at home, took foreign troops into his pay, and collected an army of a hundred thouſand foot, and twenty thouſand horſe, with which he invaded Judea. The appearance of an army, not leſs formidable for the glittering armour, than for the numbers of its men, was enough to ſtrike terror into the moſt brave; and what rendered it ſtill more formidable were two and thirty elephants, trained to war, and bearing each upon his back a ſtrong wooden tower, garriſoned with

with two and thirty warriors. Judas Machabeus was not daunted at the sight: with his usual courage and confidence in God, he led forth his troops to battle; he fought, he slew great numbers of the enemy. Eleazar, his younger brother, signalized himself by a very singular act of magnanimity. The valiant youth, having observed an elephant more remarkable than the rest for his size and glittering armour, and not knowing but Antiochus might be upon the back of him, generously resolved to sacrifice his life for the sake of finishing the war, if he could, with one stroke. He cut his way thro' the thickest of his enemies, till he reached the elephant, the object he had in view. He threw himself between the feet of the monster, and standing under it, vigorously thrust his sword into its belly. Down fell the beast, and crushed the conqueror to death in the very act of triumph. Such feats of uncommon bravery gave Antiochus no great encouragement to carry on the war: and on the other hand, Judas seeing how difficult it was to maintain the field against so numerous a host, thought it prudent to retreat to mount Sion. The king went to attack him, and was repulsed. Provisions grew scarce in the land, as it was the Sabbath-year, and the king at the same time received intelligence, that his presence was necessary to quash a rebellion, which Philip the governor had raised at Antioch: therefore, by the advice of Lysias, he granted an honourable peace to Judas Machabeus, and retired with his army into Syria.

§ XV. *Death of Judas Machabeus.* 1 *Mac.* 9.

ANTIOCHUS did not long survive the treaty, which he had made with Judas Machabeus. Demetrius, the son of Seleucus, having escaped from Rome, where he had been detained as a hostage in the room of his uncle

A. M. 3842, *Before J. C.* 158.

cle Antiochus Epiphanes, declared himself king, and being well supported in his claim, he deprived his cousin Antiochus Eupator both of the crown and life. This revolution in the kingdom of Syria had no sooner taken place, but some discontented Jews began to make their court to the new king by slandering the fame and virtues of Judas Machabeus. Amongst these enemies of their country the chief was Alcimus, a wicked and ambitious man, whom the king nominated to the high Priesthood, as a reward of his treachery, and employed as the minister of his designs against Judea. This Alcimus being joined with Bacchides in the command of a great army, did as much mischief to the people of Judea by his hypocrisy, as by open violence. For under the name and sanction of high Priest, he seduced many from their duty, and plunged them into rebellion against the laws of God and their country. Judas exerted himself with such activity against them, that he forced them to relinquish their enterprize, and to retreat with dishonour into Syria. The miscarriage of this expedition against Judea determined Demetrius, 1 *Mac.* c. 7, and 2 *Mac.* c. 14, to employ Nicanor, one of his principal lords, who was an active general, and sworn enemy to the Jewish nation. Nicanor, at the head of a powerful army, marched into the very heart of Judea, and defeated Simon with the troops he had under his command: but dreading the valour and superior abilities of Judas Machabeus, declined meeting him in the field, and solicited his friendship. Judas, who wished to spare the effusion of human blood, listened to his proposals. They entered Jerusalem together, and lived on amicable terms with one another, till the wicked Alcimus seeing himself thus disappointed in his hopes of the high Priesthood, accused Nicanor to Demetrius of being his enemy's friend. Nicanor, being then afraid of incurring the king's displeasure, resolved to seize the first opportunity of taking Judas by surprize, and of sending him prisoner to Antioch. Judas happily discovered and prevented his design. They therefore broke off their treaty of friendship, put themselves

themſelves at the head of their reſpective troops, and came to a battle, in which the Syrians were worſted with the loſs of near five thouſand men. Nicanor upon that defeat became outrageous, and being joined by an army from Syria, proudly boaſted of his mighty power, and threatened to deſtroy the Temple, unleſs Judas were delivered into his hands. Judas, whoſe truſt was in God, aſſembled and exhorted his troops to battle, with all that manly fortitude, for which he was ſo remarkable, and fervently intreated the Almighty to ſend his holy Angel to their defence, as he had formerly ſent him againſt Sennacherib, and in one night had ſlain a hundred and eighty thouſand of the Aſſyrian army. Almighty God heard his prayer, and comforted him with an apparition of the holy prieſt Onias, and the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah preſented him with a golden ſword to deſtroy the enemies of Iſrael, and Onias told him, that Jeremiah the prophet of God was a lover of his brethren, and prayed much for the people and holy city. Judas related this viſion to his ſoldiers, who were exceedingly encouraged thereby, they marched full of confidence to battle; five and thirty thouſand fell of the Syrians, among whom was Nicanor himſelf, and a complete victory was won. Judas commanded Nicanor's head and right arm, which he had inſolently lifted up againſt the Temple, to be ſevered from his body, and carried to Jeruſalem. His tongue moreover, which had uttered blaſphemies againſt the Moſt-high, was cut into ſmall pieces, and given to the birds.

This victory was the laſt of Judas Machabeus. Demetrius raiſed freſh troops, and poured in new armies upon the conquerors, who began to be wearied by the length, and diſheartened by the labours of a war, to which they ſaw no end. Moſt of Judas's men declined the ſervice; all to eight hundred abandoned him in the field, and they that remained, exhorted him to a prudent retreat. No, let us riſe, ſaid he, let us march to meet our enemies; tho' the reſt are ſhrunk away, we may be ſtill able to maintain our ground. God forbid we ſhould ever fly from

from the face of our adversaries: it would be shameful to turn our backs upon them, whom we have so often vanquished. If our time is come, let us die like men in the defence of our country. With this resolution he led out his little troop against an army of two and twenty thousand Syrians, commanded by Bacchides and the wicked Alcimus. It was fought with great obstinacy from morning till evening: Judas forced the enemy's right wing, and put it to flight; but pursuing them too far, he was attacked by those in the left wing, that closed in upon him: there overpowered by numbers, he as gloriously fell, as he had bravely fought. His brothers took his body, and buried it with their fathers in the city of Modin.

A happy death, after a life of heroic virtues, is the term, which every Christian ought to have constantly in view. Never to degenerate from the sublime thoughts of the sons of God, never to stoop to actions, that disgrace the noble character of a Christian, and never to shrink back from the divine service, should be his principle and unvarying resolution. No human respects or fears, no appearance of difficulties ought to dishearten him in the undertaking. He has God for his witness and the helper of his endeavours. The struggle lasts not long; his labours soon will end; the glory, that awaits his victory, is everlasting. The only thing he has to fear, while life remains, is lest he should fear any thing more than Him, who is his protection upon earth, and his reward in heaven.

§ XVI.

§ XVI. *Jonathan High-priest.* 1 *Mac.* 9.

AFTER the death of Judas Macha- *A. M.* 3843,
beus, his brother Jonathan was *Before J. C.* 157.
choſen by general conſent to ſupply his place, and to fight the battles of Iſrael. He collected the broken troops of the republic together, formed them into an army, and retreated into the deſert of Thecua, judging it more adviſeable to harraſs the enemy by frequent ſkirmiſhes, than to riſk the fortune of his country in a pitched battle. This prudent plan of operations had the deſired effect: for by the vigorous defence he made, when attacked, and by the many advantages he ſeized to attack in his turn, he forced Bacchides, who commanded the Syrians againſt him, to evacuate the country, and ſubſcribe to articles of peace. Jonathan, having nothing more to fear from foreign enemies, began to reſtore good order amongſt his ſubjects at home, and to repair the evils, which had been occaſioned by the war. His power was reſpected, and his friendſhip courted by the very prince, who a little before had been his implacable enemy. For a young competitor of the crown of Syria had lately ſtarted up in the perſon of Alexander Bales, the ſon of Antiochus Epiphanes, and made Demetrius totter upon his throne. Theſe two rivals divided the power and affections of the Syrians equally betwixt them; and each of them being ſenſible that the ſcale of empire muſt turn to whichever ſide Jonathan ſhould incline, they both ſolicited his friendſhip. Jonathan gave fair words to them both, tho' his inclination byaſſed him in favour of Alexander. Alexander in effect defeated his antagoniſt, whom he ſlew in battle, and poſſeſſed himſelf of the crown of Syria. He treated Jonathan with great reſpect, acknowledged him to be the High-prieſt of the Jewiſh nation, and invited him to the

the city of Ptolemais, where he was to receive the king of Egypt, and eſpouſe his daughter. Jonathan accepted of the invitation, and that he might appear of ſome conſequence before two ſuch mighty kings, he went in great ſtate, carrying with him magnificent preſents for Alexander; for he knew that ſome factious Jews were gone before to lodge their complaints againſt him. Alexander received him with every mark of honour and eſteem; and they, who came to be his accuſers, had the confuſion to ſee him confirmed in his high dignity, and ſeated upon a level with the kings themſelves. Alexander ſoon after met with an untimely end: for the late Demetrius had left a ſon of the ſame name, who being ſupported by Ptolemee king of Egypt, laid claim to the crown of Syria, and by the murder of Alexander, entered into actual poſſeſſion of the kingdom. This prince had ſent his general Apollonius with an army into Judea to repay Jonathan for the part he had taken in favour of Alexander. The revenge he meditated, ended in his diſgrace. Jonathan gave Apollonius battle, and put his army to flight. Demetrius thus perceiving, that no advantage was likely to be reaped from the enmity of a man ſo verſed in the art of war, reſolved to court his friendſhip. Peace therefore being reſtored to the two nations of Syria and Judea, the people breathed for ſome time, till the war was again renewed by Tryphon. Tryphon was an officer of Alexander's party, and having his eye upon the crown of Syria, declared himſelf againſt Demetrius, and proclaimed Antiochus, the young ſon of Alexander, king in his ſtead. Jonathan ſent three thouſand valiant warriors to Antioch for the ſupport of Demetrius, his friend and ally: theſe troops executed the commiſſion, they were ſent upon, with ſo much vigour, that they ſlew in one day no fewer than a hundred thouſand of Demetrius's enemies, and thereby put him again in peaceful poſſeſſion of his kingdom. But Demetrius ſoon after breaking his faith with Jonathan, and being defeated by Tryphon, forced the Hebrew chief to declare in favour of the young Antiochus, who was crowned,

crowned, and acknowledged king at Antioch. Tryphon, having thus ſtrengthened his intereſt amongſt the Syrians, thought he had now no other obſtacle than Jonathan's attachment to Antiochus, that could hinder him from taking the crown from his prince's brow, and ſetting it upon his own. He therefore formed a ſcheme to put Jonathan out of the way. Treachery effected what no force of arms or money could have done. Under the ſpecious ſhow of friendſhip Tryphon invited Jonathan into the town of Ptolemais. Jonathan imprudently believed him to be ſincere, diſbanded his army, and truſted himſelf with no more than a thouſand attendants in one of the ſtrong towns of his natural enemies. He had no ſooner entered into Ptolemais, than the gates were ſhut, he traiterouſly taken, and his followers put to the ſword. Such was the fatal conſequence of truſting himſelf to a pretended friend, whoſe intereſt it was to betray him.

Fortitude, tho' a cardinal virtue, is not the only virtue requiſite for our conduct in life. Without prudence we ſhall often run ourſelves into ſtreights, from which no fortitude will be able to ſave or extricate us. Our bleſſed Saviour tells his followers to unite the prudence of the ſerpent with the ſimplicity of the dove: this will teach us not to deceive, that will make us wary againſt the deceits of others. To deceive, or to be deceived, ſays Saint Jerom, is unworthy of a Chriſtian: the one argues a want of diſcretion, the other a want of fidelity to God and man.

§ XVII.

§ XVII. *Simon High-priest.* 1 *Mac.* 13.

A. M. 3861, *Before J. C.* 139. OF the five gallant sons of Mathathias Simon was the only one left for the defence of Judea in her distress. Simon waited for no invitation to serve his country: having shared in all the labours, and in all the dangers, that his brothers had undergone in the public service, he voluntarily stept forward, and offered himself to his fellow citizens. You know, said he to them, what great battles I and my brethren and my father's house have fought in defence of our holy laws and sanctuary. You are witnesses of the distresses we have felt; my brethren have lost their lives in the service of Israel, and I am left alone. Far be it from me to spare my life in these times of public trouble, for I am not better than my brethren. I will avenge my nation and the sanctuary, and our children and wives; for the heathens have collected their forces together, and from mere malice meditate our ruin. Simon's words infused a generous ardour into the breasts of the people; they chose him for their leader in the place of Judas and Jonathan, bade him fight their battles, and promised to do whatever he should order. Simon lost no time, drew an army together, finished the fortifications of Jerusalem, and took the field against Tryphon, who was advancing with a numerous army towards the confines of Judea. Tryphon had not expected to meet with such a force, or to find a general so ready to oppose him. He therefore sent deputies to Simon, pretending that he had only detained Jonathan on account of money, which was due from him to the king's treasury, and promised to release him upon condition, that a hundred talents of silver were paid for his ransom, and his two sons sent as hostages for his good behaviour. Simon knew the deceitful language, and suspected the traitor's design was to destroy both the father and his sons,

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after he had received the money for his ranſom: but being apprehenſive, leſt he might incur the diſpleaſure of the Jews, if he ſhould not do his utmoſt to ſet Jonathan at liberty, punctually fulfilled the conditions, that were required on his part. The event ſoon ſhowed, that his ſuſpicions had not been ill grounded: for the perfidious Syrian was no ſooner poſſeſſed of the ſum he wanted, than he ſlew Jonathan with both his ſons, and then marched away into his own country.

Simon's endeavours to ſave his brother's life having proved ineffectual, he reſolved to honour him after death. Having recovered the dead body out of his enemy's hands, he carried it to Modin, and there depoſited it with the remains of his renowned father and brethren: he erected over them a magnificent monument, as an honorary tribute due to the memory of thoſe illuſtrious chiefs, who had eminently diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the defence of God's people: his motive was to honour the merit of the deceaſed, not to flatter the vanity of the living. Simon governed the Jewiſh nation with great wiſdom and ſteadineſs for eight years, when one Ptolemy, his ſon-in-law, being inſtigated with a wicked deſire of power, conſpired againſt and deprived him of life. His death was univerſally lamented by the people, and his remains were with due honour interred at Modin, in the monument, which he himſelf had erected to his family predeceſſors.

Such was the end of thoſe illuſtrious Machabees, whom God in his ſingular providence raiſed up to fight his battles, and with them ends the hiſtory of the old teſtament. Thoſe five glorious brothers, being all animated with the ſame ſpirit, and inflamed with the ſame zeal in the midſt of perils for the ſervice of God and their country, exhibit a bright example to the champions of the new law, which ſucceeded ſoon after. They teach their Chriſtian ſucceſſors, with what intrepidity and zeal they are to ſtand forth in the cauſe of virtue and religion, how unbyaſſed by private intereſt, how united amongſt themſelves, how free from envy and ambition, how indefatigable,

defatigable, how active in their undertaking, how dependent upon God for ſucceſs. Amidſt the conſtant hurry and alarms of war, they always found time for prayer, and by their prayers obtained the divine bleſſing upon their arms and country.

Simon was ſucceeded both in the ſacerdotal and civil power by his ſon John, who from a victory he gained over the Hyrcanians, obtained the ſurname of Hyrcanus. Hyrcanus left the ſovereign power to his ſon Ariſtobulus, who aſſumed the crown and title of king. Hence the regal ſceptre was tranſmitted from one to another of the Jewiſh nation, till Herod, by the means of Mark Antony, obtained it of the Roman people, and was acknowledged king in Jeruſalem. Herod being an Idumean by birth, and conſequently of a foreign race, in him the ſceptre of Juda failed. A leader of Jacob's line no longer preſided over the Jewiſh people; the term foretold by that holy Patriarch to his ſon Judas for the coming of the Meſſiah, the expectation of nations, was then at hand. In the thirty ſeventh year of king Herod's reign, which was the four thouſandth of the world, Jeſus Chriſt, the eternal Son of God, was for us men born in Bethlehem, a town of Juda.

End of the ſixth age,

AND OF THE

OLD TESTAMENT.

AN

ABRIDGMENT

OF THE

HISTORY

OF THE

NEW TESTAMENT,

INTERSPERSED WITH

INSTRUCTIVE and MORAL

REFLECTIONS,

CHIEFLY TAKEN FROM

The HOLY FATHERS.

AN

ABRIDGMENT

OF THE

Hiſtory of the New Teſtament.

Seventh age of the world.

From the coming of Jeſus Chriſt to the end of time.

§ I. *Saint Matthew the Evangeliſt.*

BEFORE we enter upon the hiſtorical narration of facts in the New Teſtament, it may not be thought ſuperfluous to give ſome account of the four Evangeliſts, who were inſpired to write them. The four Goſpels, as they are called from the names of their ſacred writers, are in fact four books of the ſame one and individual Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, who teaches us therein the truth, and the way to eternal life. Of the four Evangeliſts Saint Matthew is the firſt in order, who of a publican became an Apoſtle. He wrote his Goſpel in Jeruſalem, at the requeſt of thoſe Jews, who had embraced the Chriſtian faith, according to Saint Jerom, or according to Saint Epiphanius, in conſequence of an order from the Apoſtles themſelves. He wrote it not in Greek, but in the Hebrew or Syrian language, as Euſebius in his hiſtory, and ſeveral holy Fathers affirm. Saint Jerom moreover adds, with Euſebius, that Pantinus, in his miſſion amongſt the Indians, found

found an original copy of Saint Matthew's Goſpel, written in Hebrew, which he brought to Alexandria, and which in his time was kept in the library of Cæſarea. This original is ſince loſt, but the Greek tranſlation of it has been carefully preſerved. Who the author of this tranſlation was, we cannot preciſely tell: ſome of the Fathers attribute it to Saint John, others to his brother Saint James. Saint Matthew, according to the remark of Saint Auſtin, ſeems to have had the humanity of Jeſus Chriſt chiefly in his eye, and therefore ſets off with a genealogical account of his royal deſcent from David, and in the progreſs of his Goſpel exhibits to us the chief tranſactions of his life upon earth. For this reaſon he is not ſo ſublime, either in his ſtile or ſentiment, as Saint John, who frequently treats of the myſtery of the bleſſed Trinity, and diſcourſes of the divinity of Jeſus Chriſt. The manner therefore of Saint Matthew's writing ſeems more adapted to the capacity of the faithful in general, becauſe he enters into a more particular detail of thoſe actions and inſtructions, in which Jeſus Chriſt was pleaſed to accommodate himſelf to our weakneſs, and to place the example of his virtues within the reach of our imitation. Altho' it belongs not to us to ſeek out reaſons, and to form conjectures about the ſecret deſigns of God, in inſpiring four different men to write the ſame Goſpel, yet this we may ſay, that the will of Jeſus Chriſt is to have his holy law written in the hearts, and expreſſed in the interior life of all Chriſtians, that their exterior actions may exhibit the viſible characters of that inviſible charity, which he deſires to ſee imprinted in our ſouls. The deſign of Jeſus Chriſt was not ſimply to inſtruct us by his written word, it was moreover to excite in his followers a deſire of copying his actions, when they ſhould read or hear the example he had given them; ſo that the luſtre of his virtues, as well as the truth of his doctrine might be perpetuated from age to age, not in the dead letter, but in the living actions of the faithful. However commendable it may be to read the Goſpel with reſpect and attention, yet the knowledge of it will avail us nothing without the practice of what we read:

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for the moſt perfect knowledge of every Evangelical truth will never make us the true diſciples of a God-man, unleſs we comply with thoſe ſacred precepts, and in our lives trace out thoſe religious virtues, which he has taught us: then it is, and only then, that we become the images of the life of Jeſus Chriſt, as Jeſus Chriſt both is and always was the perfect image of his Father. It is not certain in what year Saint Matthew wrote his Goſpel, but it is generally thought to have been about the year forty-two, that is about eight years after our bleſſed Saviour's aſcenſion into heaven.

§ II. *Saint Mark the Evangeliſt.*

OF Mark frequent mention is made in the acts of the Apoſtles, and in the epiſtles of Saint Paul. But it is not clear, who that Mark was, whether the Evangeliſt, as Saint Jerom ſeems to think, or another of the ſame name, whom Saint Peter mentions at the end of his firſt epiſtle, and calls his ſon. However that may have been, the conſtant tradition is, that the Evangeliſt was the Mark, who preached the Chriſtian faith in Egypt, and founded the church of Alexandria, the ſecond metropolitan in the world. Moſt of the holy Fathers ſeem to agree in opinion, that Saint Mark wrote his Goſpel at Rome, conformable to the information, which he received from Saint Peter, and at the requeſt of the Chriſtians there, as Euſebius informs us. For that celebrated hiſtorian having related the wonderful ſucceſs, which accompanied Saint Peter's preaching at Rome, adds, *L. 2. c. 15.* that they, who heard him, were ſo charmed with the excellency of his doctrine, that they deſired to have it in writing: the important truths, that fell from the mouth of the holy Apoſtle, excited their piety, and made them wiſh to refreſh their memory, by reading at their leiſure, what they had heard him ſpeak. They therefore addreſſed themſelves to Mark, the diſciple of Saint Peter, and by their entreaties prevailed upon him to pen down the Evangelical

Evangelical hiſtory, which bears his name. It was written under the inſpection, and publiſhed by the approbation of Saint Peter, who on that account was thought by ſome, as Tertullian ſays, to have been the author of the work. Saint Auſtin and Saint Jerom, with moſt of the holy Fathers, are of opinion, that Mark wrote his Goſpel in Greek, tho' by the ſtile and frequent Hebraiſms, that occur in his writings, he ſeems to have been a native of Judea, and more familiar with the Hebrew, than the Greek idiom. He for the moſt part ſticks cloſe to Saint Matthew in his narration of facts, often makes uſe of the ſame words, and in many places does but abridge the hiſtory. He alters indeed the order of the narration at times, adds ſome new circumſtances, and relates ſeveral entire facts, of which Saint Matthew makes no mention. He ſays nothing of Saint Peter's walking upon the ſea, nor of the high commendations he received from our bleſſed Saviour upon his confeſſing him to be the Son of God, but is very particular in the circumſtances of his denying his divine maſter, which Saint Chryſoſtom attributes to the great humility of that Apoſtle, who guided his diſciple's pen. The ſame holy Doctor aſks, why of the four, that were appointed to write the hiſtory of Jeſus Chriſt, no more than two were choſen out of the ſacred college of Apoſtles? For Saint Mark, as well as Saint Luke, were only diſciples, the firſt of Saint Peter, and the latter of Saint Paul. To which he anſwers, that thoſe holy men were not moved by the deſire of human praiſe in any of their undertakings, but that the ſole glory of God, and advantage of the Church, directed them in their thoughts and actions, as the Holy Ghoſt inſpired. Saint Mark wrote his Goſpel about the third year of Claudius, as it is thought, that is, about the forty-third year of our Lord. His diction is conciſe and expreſſive, his periods are concluded with a pleaſing and elegant ſimplicity.

§ III.

§ III. *Saint Luke the Evangeliſt.*

SAINT Luke was a native of Antioch, the capital city of Syria, the companion of Saint Paul in his Apoſtolical excurſions, and ſtiled by him the beloved phyſician and his fellow labourer. When or how he became a proſelyte to the Chriſtian religion, is uncertain. What he has written in his Goſpel, he learnt from thoſe, who, as he himſelf ſays, were from the beginning eye-witneſſes and miniſters of the word: for he was not converſant with our bleſſed Saviour, as Saint Matthew & Saint John were. By a ſpecial diſpoſition of the divine wiſdom it was ordained, ſays Saint Auſtin, that the Evangelical hiſtory ſhould be written by two men, who had not ſeen the things they relate, to the end we might learn to ſubmit our underſtanding in obedience to divine faith, whether it be communicated to us by an Apoſtle, or only by a diſciple of an Apoſtle. For the certitude of truth, which is contained in the holy Goſpel, reſts not upon the grounds of human evidence, which at moſt can afford us nothing more, than a moral certainty; it reſts upon the ſpecial aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, who could not inſpire the ſacred penmen to write any thing, but what was true. God is truth itſelf; he cannot be deceived in what he ſees, nor can he deceive us in what he reveals. In the Goſpel therefore every fact is equally certain, and the doctrine equally true, whether written by one Evangeliſt or by another; for the writers were equally inſpired, and what they ſay, is undoubtedly the infallible word of God. The eſteem, which Saint Luke was in, ſpread from one Church to another on account of his Goſpel, which Saint Paul approved and recommended; and great, ſays Saint Ambroſe, muſt have been the merit of this Evangeliſt, who was ſo highly commended by the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles. What induced him to write his Goſpel was the raſh preſumption of ſome other writers, who had obtruded their own compoſitions upon the public, and had gravely given out their own fabulous relations for the true hiſtory of Jeſus Chriſt.

Chriſt. To prevent the miſchief, that might ariſe from thence, he diligently informed himſelf of the real truth from thoſe enlightened Apoſtles, who had been acquainted with our bleſſed Saviour from the beginning; he collected a circumſtantial account of the things, which Jeſus had ſaid and done, and publiſhed it for the inſtruction of the faithful. He has expreſſed himſelf with a greater purity of language, than the other Evangeliſts; for he was well verſed in the Greek tongue, as Saint Jerom remarks, and in that language he wrote both his Goſpel and his acts of the Apoſtles. There is great elegance and perſpicuity in his ſtile, an eminent ſublimity of thought, accompanied with that genuine ſimplicity, which characteriſes the work of an inſpired writer. He is thought to have written his Goſpel about the year of our Lord fifty three; his Acts were not finiſhed before the year ſixty three. He lived in a ſtate of celibacy to the eighty fourth year of his age, and as the Church ſays of him, always carried about in his body the mortification of the croſs, for the honour of the divine name: ſo that, if his death was not ſignalized by the actual effuſion of his blood in teſtimony of the true faith, as the holy Fathers ſeem to doubt, we may at leaſt ſay of him, in the words of Saint Jerom, that his life was a long and continual martyrdom.

§ IV. *Saint John the Evangeliſt.*

SAINT John was a native of the town of Bethſaida, the ſon of Zebedee, and brother to Saint James, ſurnamed the Greater. Being unmarried, and in the flower of his youth, he was called to the Apoſtleſhip, in which ſtate he remained a virgin to his death, as Saint Jerom relates. The virginal purity of his body & mind made him the beloved diſciple of his divine maſter, ſays the ſame Father: this it was, which rendered him more worthy of Jeſus's love: this entitled him to the privilege of reſting his head in the boſom of our Lord at his laſt ſupper: in conſideration of this, Jeſus Chriſt in his ago-

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ny upon the croſs recommended his virgin mother to him, in whom there was a reſemblance of chaſtity and holy love. After the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt he preached the faith in Aſia Minor, where he founded the different Churches, which he continued to direct by his Apoſtolical authority, as long as he lived, having fixed his metropolitan ſeat at Epheſus. Being called to Rome, he was condemned by the emperor Domitian to be caſt into a cauldron of boiling oil: but being miraculouſly preſerved, and coming out more freſh and vigorous, than he entered in, ſays Tertullian, he was baniſhed into the Iſland of Patmos. Here he was favoured with thoſe heavenly and myſterious viſions, which he has ſo wonderfully deſcribed in his book of Revelations. After the death of Domitian he returned to Epheſus, where he was engaged to write his Goſpel about the year ninety eight. Cerinthus and Ebion having impiouſly aſſerted with great ſcandal to the new Chriſtians, that Jeſus Chriſt had no exiſtence before that, which he received from Mary, and was conſequently no more than a pure man, all the Biſhops of Aſia Minor, as well as the deputies from ſeveral other Churches, addreſſed themſelves to Saint John, as the moſt able and beſt qualified to refute ſo blaſphemous an hereſy. Saint John's zeal for the honour of his divine maſter made him readily conſent to undertake the taſk. It was a taſk of the utmoſt importance to the Church, a taſk ſuperiour to the talents even of an Apoſtle, without the ſpecial direction of God's holy Spirit; and therefore to draw down the divine bleſſing upon his undertaking, he deſired them to join with him in prayer and public faſting. Almighty God ſeems to have rewarded their piety with ample effuſions of light upon the humble Evangeliſt. Full of the holy Spirit, and animated by the dignity of his ſubject, Saint John pointed his ſtile much higher than any one of the other three Evangeliſts, and in a ſtrain the moſt ſublime, began by eſtabliſhing the divinity of God's eternal WORD. Saint John, ſays the learned Saint Auſtin in his comments upon this Goſpel, was in a ſpecial manner made choice of to unfold the divinity of Jeſus Chriſt. The other three Evangeliſts

geliſts ſeem to walk with Jeſus Chriſt upon the ſurface of the earth, and in their progreſs relate the actions of his mortal life, while Saint John, like an eagle, ſoars aloft above the clouds of human underſtanding, and penetrating into the boſom of the Father, fixes his eye upon the Divine Word, the co-eternal Son of God, without being dazzled by the rays, or overpowered by the glory of infinite majeſty. To record the ſentences, and to pen down the ſublime inſtructions of his divine maſter, ſeems to have been the application of this Evangeliſt more than of any other. For whilſt the others dwell chiefly upon thoſe actions of our Saviour, which ſerve to regulate the manners, and direct the conduct of our lives, Saint John is eager to ſupply their omiſſions of thoſe more exalted truths, which contain the myſtery of the bleſſed Trinity, the equality of the three divine Perſons, and the glory of a life to come. And we cannot but obſerve, adds the ſame holy Doctor, that tho' the deſire of eſtabliſhing the moſt elevated points of doctrine, made him firſt take up his pen, yet the love we owe our brethren, after the example of Jeſus Chriſt, is what ſeems to animate him thro' all his writings: and tho' the object he had in view, was to prove the divinity of Jeſus Chriſt, yet of all the ſacred writers he is the only one, who has repreſented to us his humility in waſhing the diſciples feet: by which he undoubtedly inſinuates to us, that the moſt ſublime knowledge of religion ought ever to be accompanied with the virtues of charity and humility.

§ V. *Annunciation of the bleſſed Virgin.* *Luke* 1.

A. M. 4000. WHEN the plentitude of time was come, that God had fixed from eternity to ſhower down his bleſſings upon mankind by giving them a Redeemer, the Angel Gabriel was firſt deputed to Zachary, a holy Prieſt, whoſe wife was Elizabeth, of the daughters of Aaron. The heavenly meſſenger came to tell him, that he ſhould have a ſon, whoſe name

name ſhould be John, and whoſe birth ſhould be a ſubject of joy to many in Iſrael. Six months after Almighty God deputed the ſame Angel to a Virgin, whoſe name was Mary, reſiding in Nazareth, a city of Galilee. Mary had been eſpouſed to a holy man, called Joſeph, a deſcendant of the houſe of David. The divine Providence had in a ſpecial manner preſided over thoſe nuptials, which provided the Virgin with a guardian and protector of her purity. For with the ſame ſentiments of virtue, and in the ſame diſpoſitions of mind, ſays Saint Auſtin, both Mary and Joſeph entered into a mutual engagement of joining the marriage ſtate with a ſtate of virginity, of which the world had not yet ſeen an example. Almighty God honoured this alliance with an iſſue, that was to ſet open the gates of Heaven, which for ages had been ſhut againſt us by the crime of our firſt parents. Mary was the woman deſtined by Almighty God to cruſh the Serpent's head, as it is written in the book of Geneſis, c. 3. and it was to obtain her conſent, that God then ſent his Angel to Nazareth. The Angel found her alone, as Saint Ambroſe obſerves, and reſpectfully ſaid unto her, *Hail! full of grace, the Lord is with thee; bleſſed art thou amongſt women!* The humble Virgin was diſturbed at the Angel's ſalutation, and trembled with fear, leſt as Eve had been deceived by the Serpent, ſhe alſo might be miſled by a ſimilar deluſion. She conſidered the ſenſe and import of his words, and thereby gives us an admirable example of diſcretion, which teaches us not to be too haſty in conſenting to a propoſal, before we underſtand the nature of its obligation. The Angel ſaw the trouble of her mind, and to appeaſe it, ſaid, Fear not, Mary; for you have found favour with the Lord. He then opened the ſubject of his commiſſion, and told her, That ſhe ſhould conceive and bring forth a ſon, and call his name JESUS: that he ſhould be great, even the Son of the Moſt-high; that he ſhould ſit upon the throne of David; that he ſhould reign in the houſe of Jacob, and that of his kingdom there ſhould be no end. The Virgin liſtened to the Angel

gel with great attention; ſhe heard the wonderful thing, he promiſed, but deſired to know, how it could poſſibly be done, becauſe ſhe was a Virgin. It was not an idle curioſity, but a mark of her ſubmiſſion to the divine will, nor was it a want of faith, but an intimation of the chaſte purpoſe of her mind, which induced her to aſk the Angel that queſtion. The Angel in reply aſſured her, that no concurrence of man was requiſite for what the ſole power of the Moſt-high with her conſent would operate within her; that by the ineffable virtue of the Holy Ghoſt ſhe ſhould conceive, bear a ſon, and ſtill remain a pure Virgin. It is what the prophet Iſaiah, c. vii. had expreſsly foretold. But to convince the Virgin, that nothing was impoſſible to God, the Angel moreover told her what had happened to her couſin Elizabeth in an advanced age, who notwithſtanding the many years ſhe had been reputed barren, had miraculouſly conceived, and was ſix months gone with child. The Virgin having thus received the information ſhe deſired, and being told the manner, in which the myſtery was to be wrought within her, gave her conſent. In terms the moſt humble and ſubmiſſive, terms, that expreſſed the holy diſpoſition of her heart, ſhe ſaid, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to thy word.

The Angel having thus happily completed his commiſſion, returned to Heaven, and the wonderful myſtery of the Incarnation took place that inſtant. For Mary had no ſooner given her conſent, than the Son of God, the ſecond Perſon of the moſt adorable Trinity, by an inviſible and inexplicable operation of the Holy Ghoſt, took fleſh, and *became Man* in her womb, without the leaſt detriment to her virginal integrity. That was the happy moment, in which the work of man's redemption was begun; that was the moment, when an incarnate God unlocked the ſource of thoſe plentiful graces, which were to flow for the ſalvation of mankind, to waſh our ſouls from ſin, and to ſanctify them for eternal life.

§ VI.

§ VI. *Viſitation of the bleſſed Virgin. Luke* 1.

MARY was no ſooner become the mother of a God incarnate, than ſhe *A. M.* 4000.
haſtened to pay a viſit to her couſin Elizabeth. With a cheerful alacrity, which ſhould always accompany the performance of a good action, ſhe ſet out upon a long and toilſome journey into the mountainous part of Judea, to congratulate her couſin on the happy event of her being ſix months gone with child. When ſhe came to Zachary's houſe ſhe entered in, and without mentioning the pre-eminence of her own maternity, humbly ſaluted Elizabeth. Elizabeth no ſooner heard the Virgin's voice ſaluting her with the ſweet tidings of peace, than ſhe felt her infant exulting for joy within her womb. Thus John the Baptiſt, before he could ſee to point him out, became the firſt adorer of Jeſus Chriſt upon earth, and by the impreſſion he then made upon his mother, entered upon the office of precurſor to our Lord, even before he was born. Elizabeth ſeemed at a loſs how to expreſs what ſhe felt upon this extraordinary interview; inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt, ſhe cried out, Bleſſed art thou amongſt women, and bleſſed is the fruit of thy womb! and whence is it, that the mother of my Lord ſhould come in this manner to me? Mary, who was not to be outdone either in the ſentiments or in the expreſſions of humility, attributed nothing of her unparalleled greatneſs to herſelf, but gave the whole glory to God her Saviour. Unable, as it were, to contain the flowing tide of gratitude, that filled her ſoul at the thought of God's goodneſs towards her, ſhe burſt out into that excellent canticle, the Magnificat, which may be juſtly ſtiled the eulogy of the humble, and confuſion of the proud. Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months, till the Baptiſt was born and circumciſed, as ſeems moſt probable, and then returned to her own houſe at Nazareth.

Mary teaches us by her conduct on this occaſion not to ſeek the applauſe of men by the ſervices we do them, nor to make a boaſt of the good we have done, or of the

gifts we have received. If Almighty God in his goodneſs imparts to us the power or the talents to aſſiſt our brethren, to him only we are to give the glory; to ourſelves nothing is due, but the confuſion for having either neglected our talents, or not employed them to the beſt advantage.

§ VII. *Birth of Jeſus Chriſt. Luke* 2.

A. M. 4000, *A. D.* 1. THE favours of almighty God to his Saints are oftentimes accompanied with trials of affliction: and this the bleſſed Virgin experienced upon her return to Nazareth. For her pregnancy beginning to appear, St. Joſeph her huſband was diſturbed at the myſtery, which he knew not how to account for. He had obſerved nothing in his ſpouſe, which was not conformable to the ſtricteſt rules of the moſt immaculate virtue, he had a high opinion of her ſanctity, and being a juſt man and unwilling publickly to expoſe her, thought of putting her away privately. Under this perplexity of mind and undetermined what to do, he fell aſleep, when, behold, during the ſilence of the night, God ſent an Angel to comfort and free him from his doubts. Joſeph, ſon of David, ſaid the Angel to him, be under no apprehenſions concerning Mary thy ſpouſe; for that, which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghoſt, ſhe ſhall bring forth a ſon, and thou ſhalt call his name Jeſus; for he ſhall ſave his people from their ſins. By this heavenly meſſage Joſeph was more convinced than ever of the unparalleled perfections of his ſpouſe, and he teaches us by his conduct, how cautious we ought to be in the ſteps we take, and in the judgments we form with reſpect to our neighbour, and how great our obligation is to judge favourably of the good and virtuous, notwithſtanding the unfavourable circumſtances, that may appear againſt them. Joſeph gave implicit credit to the Angel; in the eyes of men he became the reputed father of Jeſus Chriſt, of whom his Virgin ſpouſe was really the mother.

Mary

Mary having almoſt gone her full time, ſeemed to wait the day of her being brought to bed at Nazareth, and yet the Prophet Micheas c. 3. had expreſsly ſaid, that from Bethlehem ſhould come forth the leader to rule the people of Iſrael. The hand as well as the eye of almighty God reaches from end to end thro' the whole extent of times and places: in his wiſdom he ſo diſpoſes all things, that he moſt powerfully, but ſweetly makes his creatures ſubſervient to his deſigns, even while they ſeem to take their ordinary courſe.

After many long and violent ſtruggles for ſuperiority amongſt the Roman chiefs, the whole world was then in peace under the command of Auguſtus Cæſar, the Roman Emperor. That mighty prince, being ambitious to know the preciſe number of his ſubjects, publiſhed an edict, by which all in their reſpective provinces were commanded to repair to the town of their anceſtors, that their names might be there enrolled by the proper officer. In obedience to that edict Joſeph with his ſpouſe was obliged to go to Bethlehem, his paternal town of reſidence; for he was of the houſe and family of David. A long journey in December, when ſhort days and the wintry ſeaſon incommoded the moſt ſturdy traveller, was neceſſarily attended with great inconveniences to a delicate woman in Mary's condition. But Mary in the Emperor's edict adored the hand of God, and reſpectfully ſubmitted to his divine pleaſure, being perſuaded, that whenever he makes his will known whether by an Angel, or by man his ſubſtitute, he is with equal cheerfulneſs to be obeyed. Being come to Bethlehem, they found the inns and public places of reception already full, for great was the concourſe of ſtrangers at that time. In vain did Joſeph ſeek thro' the town for a night's lodging: no one would admit, no one ſhelter them under his roof. They were forced to be content with a ſtable, where they ſcreened themſelves as well as they could againſt the inclemency of a winter's night. This was the place, and theſe were the circumſtances, in which our divine Redeemer choſe to appear. When the night had finiſhed half its courſe, and the whole creation lay huſhed in

ſilence,

ſilence, when the hour was come for the Eternal Word to be born in time, the undefiled and ever immaculate Virgin brought forth her firſt-born Son, wrapped him up in ſwaddling clothes, and laid him in the manger. There unknown to the world, and rejected by his own choſen people, ſhivering with cold, and deſtitute of the common ſolaces of life, Jeſus lay in an open ſtable, the outcaſt as it were of men, tho' he had the whole univerſe at his diſpoſal. By choice he began to dwell amongſt us in a ſtate of humility, of poverty and ſufferings, and by that has ſhown us, what judgment we are to form of the pride, of the magnificence, and pleaſures of a ſinful world. Nothing, ſay the holy Fathers, can give us an inſtruction equal to this wonderful humiliation of the Son of God: by the profound humiliation of Jeſus Chriſt in the ſtable of Bethlehem we are more powerfully moved to adore his infinite power, than by all the ſhining beauties, we admire in the univerſe. The ſtate of helpleſs infancy, to which an omnipotent God was pleaſed to ſtoop, ought daily to remind us, that we always ſtand more in need of the divine help, than a new-born child does of the help of men.

§ VIII. *Shepherds at the crib in Bethlehem. Luke 2.*

JESUS Chriſt was no ſooner born, than he began to make himſelf known, not to the learned doctors, or mighty princes of the people, who were little qualified to learn the humility of an incarnate God, but to a few lowly and illiterate ſhepherds, whoſe ſimplicity made them little in their own eyes, and diſpoſed them to know the hidden myſteries of the Divinity. For in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem there were ſhepherds ſtanding upon the watch to guard their flocks from the dangers of the night, and their watchfulneſs points out a duty incumbent upon thoſe, who wiſh to know and follow Jeſus Chriſt. As a token of the great Light, which was now riſen to diſpel the ſhade of death, a beamy brightneſs ſhone from the heavens, and, behold, an Angel of the Lord

Lord approached. Struck at the awful appearance, the ſhepherds trembled with exceeding fear. Fear not, ſaid the Angel; I am come to bring you tidings of great joy, which ſhall likewiſe extend to all the people: for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Chriſt the Lord, in Bethlehem the city of David. You will know him by the ſign I give you: you will find the Infant wrapped round with ſwaddling clothes and laid in a manger. The heavenly meſſenger was not aſhamed of the infant ſtate, to which an omnipotent God had now humbled himſelf for the love of man, and therefore confidently deſcribed the marks, by which the great and wonderful Meſſiah was to be diſcovered. As ſoon as he had delivered his meſſage to the ſhepherds, he was joined by an innumerable troop of other cæleſtial Spirits, praiſing God and ſaying, Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will. The ſhepherds had now forgot their fears; they ſpoke with confidence and invited one another to go as far as Bethlehem, that they might ſee the wonder, which God had wrought. The Evangeliſt obſerves, that they went with ſpeed: for Jeſus Chriſt is not to be ſought with indifference, nor is he uſually found by the ſlothful. When they came to the place, they found Mary and Joſeph, and the divine infant lying in a manger, as the Angel had deſcribed him. Far from being ſcandaliſed at the meanneſs of his appearance, they were filled with admiration, they ſaw and believed; they ſpoke with raptures of the myſtery to others, who were equally aſtoniſhed at the things they heard.

Mary in the mean while was fixed in ſilent thought upon her ſon; ſhe caught attentively the words, that were ſpoken of him, and laid them up carefully in her heart. Tho' mother of the Word eternal, ſhe diſdained not to liſten to the words of illiterate ſhepherds, and gives thereby an unexceptionable reproof to thoſe ſelf-ſufficient Chriſtians, who being proud of their wordly wiſdom diſdain to conſult or hear thoſe ſpiritual paſtors, whom God has appointed to teach them the ways of truth. The word of God, whether it be heard or read by us, is the ordinary channel, thro' which almighty

ty God conveys the knowledge of ſalvation to us; we cannot receive it with too great reſpect, nor be too careful in laying it up within our hearts. Faith comes by hearing, and it is by frequently receiving and attentively conſidering the inſtructive leſſons of ſalvation, that faith is kept alive and nouriſhed in our ſouls.

§ IX. *Circumciſion of Jeſus Chriſt. Luke 2.*

A. D. 1. ON the eight day after the divine Infant was born, the bleſſed Virgin and St. Joſeph circumciſed him, as a deſcendant of Abraham, and in this exhibit a bright example of that holy ſimplicity, which teaches us not to diſpute about the law of God, but to fulfil punctually, what it ordains. A law, that had been given to Abraham, as a ſign of his faith in Him, who was to come, they knew could not oblige the Meſſias himſelf; a law, by which the ſtain of original ſin was waſhed out in the blood of him, who received it thro' the future merits of a God-man, they knew could not be for Him, who had no ſin, and by whom all ſins were remitted: yet they waited not for any new order to enforce their obedience; they ſubmitted to the law, as they found it: they were too docile to pretend an exception, where God had made none, and too humble not to conform to the common practice. But if the bleſſed Virgin and St. Joſeph appear ſo worthy of our admiration for their religious ſubmiſſion to the law, how far more admirable is the example of Jeſus Chriſt himſelf? For beſides the pain, which attended the operation, he would alſo take upon himſelf the diſgrace, and bear in his fleſh the mark of a reputed ſinner. Being by nature incapable of the leaſt blemiſh, he would notwithſtanding ſuffer the puniſhment of ſin to make us ſenſible of its enormity. When we conſider, how the innocent Jeſus at that tender age began to bleed, and to bleed on our account, we ought to bluſh at our guilty delicacy, which perſuades us either to explain away the force of our Chriſtian obligations, or to ſhun the trouble of complying with them.

The

The humility of a God ſtooping to the low condition of a ſinner ought to ſhame us of our pride, and make us eager to expiate by ſufferings and humiliations the guilty cauſe, for which the divine Jeſus ſuffered. Sufferings and humiliations pave the way to real glory. It is what happened to Jeſus Chriſt, it is what will happen to the zealous imitators of his virtues. In ſubmitting to the painful and humiliating ceremony of circumciſion the bleſſed Infant merited the adorable name of Jeſus, a name the moſt glorious, and expreſſive of his ſaving power. He abaſed himſelf by an act of humility the moſt profound; for which reaſon, as Saint Paul ſays, God hath exalted him, and hath given him a name above all other names, that in the name of JESUS every knee ſhall bow in heaven, on earth, in hell, and every tongue confeſs, that JESUS is the Lord.

A devotion towards this ſacred name began with the Church itſelf; it ought never to be pronounced but with reſpect. From generation to generation parents have taught their children to confide in this holy name, and to repeat it with a lively faith, mixt with love, that they may obtain the bleſſing of ſalvation promiſed by St. Paul to thoſe, who ſhall duly call upon it. For in calling upon Jeſus, our Saviour God, we publicly declare, that thro' him alone, and not from ourſelves, the grace of ſalvation comes. The name was brought from heaven by an Angel, the Father himſelf gave it to the divine Infant, even before he was conceived in the Virgin's womb. It therefore is our duty not to rob him of the glory, which he has thus received: we ſhould be careful not to hinder him from being a SAVIOUR to us: with profound humility let us lay open the wounds of our ſouls before him, that the merits of his life and death may heal and ſave us.

§ X.

§ X. *Adoration of the Kings. Mat. 2.*

SCARCE had the birth of Jeſus Chriſt been announced to the Jews by an Angel, when the unuſual appaɾition of a ſtar manifeſted it alſo to the Gentiles. The nations, that had ſat for ages in the darkneſs of infidelity, were admoniſhed by a miraculous light, that a king was born for the ſalvation both of Jews and Gentiles. This new ſtar appeared in the Eaſt, but of the many, to whom it appeared, we know of none, who profited by it, except the Sages, as they are called in holy Scripture. They were Kings, as we learn by tradition, and three in number. Being eager to find the King, who was ſo manifeſtly indicated to them, they loſt no time in forming doubts and difficulties, prepared their preſents, the tokens of their faith and piety, and began their journey towards Jeruſalem, as the ſtar directed them. They entered the royal city without diſguiſe, they made no ſecret of their intention; within the hearing of a jealous prince they declared, they were come to pay their adorations to a new-born King of the Jews, and deſired to know, where he might be found. Herod, who knew he had no other title to the crown of Judea, than what the Romans gave him, was much alarmed at this enquiry, which was made after another king. The Jews, who according to their carnal notion of things imagined, that the long expected Meſſiah was to reſtore their earthly kingdom to its ancient ſplendor, were in commotion at the news, and the whole city of Jeruſalem ſeemed in an uproar. Herod called together the prieſts and doctors of the Law to inform him of the place, where Chriſt was to be born. The conduct of thoſe Jewiſh doctors on that important occaſion was moſt unaccountable, and will to endleſs ages ſhow, how undeſerving they were of a mercy, which then offered itſelf to them. They told the king, that Bethlehem was the place, where he might find the Infant; they cited him the very paſſage out of the Prophet, but maliciouſly ſuppreſſed the latter part of the prophecy, which would have informed

informed him, that no temporal crown could be the purſuit of Him, who was from the beginning, and whoſe coming forth was from the days of eternity. Herod, having thus received from the doctors the information he wanted, ſent for the Sages: he told them to come privately to him, and having diligently learned from them the preciſe time of the ſtar's appearance, he civilly diſmiſſed them towards Bethlehem with a ſtrict charge to bring him back an account of the Child, when they had found him, that he alſo might go, as he pretended, to adore him. The Sages upon leaving the city ſaw the ſtar again, which they joyfully followed, till they came to Bethlehem. It there ſtopped its courſe, and reſted over the houſe, where the object of their adoration lay. They entered the houſe, and there found the Child with Mary his mother. Full of faith, and wholly bent upon the adorable object of their hope, they fell upon their knees, opened their treaſures, and with the ſame humble homage of their hearts, that was expreſſed in the bending poſture of their bodies, preſented him their myſterious offerings of gold, frankincenſe, and myrrh. When they had finiſhed their acts of adoration, they thought of returning back to Herod, having no ſuſpicion of his murderous deſigns. But God admoniſhed them in their ſleep not to go near the tyrant, and they went back another way into their own country.

Thus it was, ſays Saint Auſtin, that Jeſus Chriſt made himſelf known to ſome, whilſt he concealed himſelf from others; being ardently ſought after and adored by ſtrangers, he was ſinfully neglected by his own people. The faith of the enlightened Gentiles diſcovers to us the ſtrange infidelity of the Jews. The knowledge, which the Jews drew from the holy Scriptures, only ſerved to render them the more criminal; they made no uſe of the extraordinary lights they had received from God, they thereby forfeited thoſe precious graces, which were taken from them and given to the Gentiles. Chriſtians, who are careleſs of the divine gifts, have the ſame fatal judgment to apprehend; a ſimilar neglect draws after it a ſimilar

ſimilar chaſtiſement; darkneſs ſucceeds to light, and an obduracy of heart enſues. The miraculous ſtar, ſays the ſame Father, has diſappeared long ago; having once pointed out the Meſſiah, it has not ſince that time been ſeen: the light of the Goſpel ſhines in its ſtead. Whoever are as diligent, as the Sages were, in following this unerring light, will as ſurely find their Saviour, and reap with them the fruit of their paſt labours. Whatever marks of infidelity, they may obſerve in others, if they are ſenſible of God's great goodneſs in having called them into the admirable light of the true faith, gratitude will make them faithful to the grace of their vocation, a pious zeal will make them ready to perform the duties of it, and a deſire of being happy will teach them to adore their Saviour in ſpirit and in truth.

§ XI. *Purification of the bleſſed Virgin. Luke* 2.

A. D. 1. AT the end of forty days Mary repaired to Jeruſalem, that ſhe might there ſatisfy the twofold precept of her own Purification, and of the Child's Preſentation in the Temple according to the law of Moyſes. She knew indeed, that her virginal purity had been rendered more bright by the divine virtue of her Son; ſhe knew from the words of the law, that the obligation did not concern her; but ſhe alſo knew, that the public was not then acquainted with her ſingular privileges; ſhe had ſeen her Son ſubmit to the law of Circumciſion, and therefore would admit of no exemption, that ſhould publicly diſtinguiſh her from the reſt of her ſex. In memory of what happened to the firſt-born of Egypt, when the Iſraelites were delivered from thence, the Levitical Law ordained, that every firſt-born ſon of the children of Iſrael ſhould be conſecrated to the Lord, and then redeemed by the offering of ſome living creature, which for the rich was a lamb, and a pair of pigeons or two turtle doves for the poorer claſs. Mary, tho' deſcended from the kings of Juda, ſtood as an humble handmaid of the Lord, with a pair of doves, and

Jeſus

Jeſus in her arms. There lived at that time in Jeruſalem a good old man, called Simeon, who being adorned with every religious virtue, was waiting for the conſolation of Iſrael. By a ſecret inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt he came to the Temple at the very hour, that Jeſus was brought thither by his parents, for he had received a promiſe from the Holy Spirit, that he ſhould not depart out of life, before he had ſeen the Anointed of the Lord. Being illuminated by the interior light of faith, that filled his ſoul, he took the divine Infant into his arms, and burſt out into a tranſport of praiſe and holy joy. Now, my God, ſaid he, now thou mayeſt diſmiſs thy ſervant in peace, ſince according to thy word mine eyes have ſeen the Saviour of the world; ſince thou haſt revealed the Light, which ſhall ſhine not only on the Jews, but upon every nation of the univerſe. The bleſſed Virgin and Saint Joſeph liſtened with admiration to the venerable old man, who bleſſed them, and continued to propheſy what ſhould happen to the Son, and what a ſword of grief ſhould pierce thro' the mother's ſoul. A pious widow, whoſe name was Ann, came up at the very moment, and added to the prophecies, that Simeon had begun. Ann was a perfect model of virtue to all in her ſituation of life; after having lived ſeven years with her huſband, ſhe became a widow, and conſecrated the remainder of her days to prayer and faſting, being then eighty-four years old. The example of her virtues was the more admirable in an age, which was as corrupt and as licentious to the full, as ever diſgraced the Jewiſh nation. It teaches us, that in the midſt of a corrupt world, Chriſtians ſhould be never off their guard; that they cannot be too diligent in the duties of a well-ordered piety, leſt they forget their character, and become reprobates by the force of bad example.

The preſentation of the Child Jeſus by his Mother in the Temple, is an inſtruction to Chriſtian parents the moſt important and eſſential: for as there can be nothing in life more dear to parents, than their children, ſo nothing in reaſon ought to engage their attention more, than to procure them real happineſs. For this,

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it is their duty to recommend them frequently to God, to pray devoutly for them, and to put them in the way of obtaining the divine bleſſing. Their innocence and their timely inſtruction in Chriſtian piety is a precious treaſure committed to their care, of which God will one day demand an exact account. It is a charge of the utmoſt conſequence both to themſelves and children; a charge, which cannot duly be fulfilled without ſteady application. A certain tenderneſs of feeling, which unfortunately leads ſome parents to indulge their children's humours, and to flatter their pettiſh inclinations, is a miſtaken fondneſs; it is but a ſelfiſh love, and a real cruelty to thoſe, whom they think they love.

§ XII. *Flight into Egypt. Mat.* 2.

A. D. 1. HEROD was impatient for the Sages return from Bethlehem, till finding they had ſlighted the charge, he gave them, and were gone home another way, he was hurried into a tranſport of anger, which deluged the country with innocent blood. By an act the moſt inhuman, that was ever done by the worſt of tyrants, he has ſhown the world what his intention was, when he ſo diligently interrogated the Sages, and ſo ſtrictly ordered them to bring him back an account of the Child, they were in queſt of. But God, who laughs at man's preſumptuous folly, ſilently defeated the tyrant's malice, and made his bloody cruelty inſtrumental to the glory of the innocent. An Angel in the night informed Joſeph of the murderous deſign, that Herod had upon the Child's life, and admoniſhed him to ſave both him and the mother by a ſpeedy flight into Egypt. Joſeph in this inſtance is a perfect model of that prompt obedience, which every Chriſtian owes to the commands of God. He was commanded to riſe that moment, to leave his native country, and fly off with the Child and his mother, not towards the Sages, or to any friendly nation, but into Egypt, amidſt the idolatrous and natural enemies of the Jewiſh people. The

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tender age of the Infant, the delicate complexion of the Virgin mother, ſeemed to require every comfort, that his own private dwelling could have afforded. But that ſlender comfort was to be given up; it was dark night, and no time to be loſt in making proviſion for a long and laborious journey. The faithful guardian of the Word incarnate roſe upon the firſt notice, that was given him, punctually fulfilled every tittle of the order, took the Child and his mother, and ſet off for Egypt, uncertain when, or whether he ſhould ever return, or not. The love he bore to Jeſus, the deſire he had of ſerving him to the extent of his power, ſoftened every hardſhip, and made him forget the labours of an unexpected baniſhment.

The divine Jeſus might have rendered himſelf inviſible, or by a viſible exertion of his power might have diſarmed Herod, as he did Pharaoh in ancient times; but he choſe to fly, for the encouragement of thoſe, who were afterwards to ſuffer baniſhment for his ſake: by his own example he would inſtruct his followers, that in the heat of perſecution they may laudably fly to ſave their lives, in hopes of ſome future good. Herod began to rage with all the violence, that jealouſy, heightened by diſappointment, could inſpire. With a cruelty, that would have ſhocked the moſt ſavage barbarian, he gave orders for every male child, that had been born within the two laſt years in and about Bethlehem, to be killed. To ſuch barbarous ſhifts was that ambitious monarch driven by his politics! An innocent babe, he knew not who, made him tremble upon his throne; he tried his utmoſt ſkill to find him out, he drenched the country with harmleſs blood to make ſure of his deſtruction, he filled the air with the ſhrieks and lamentations of diſconſolate mothers, that he might draw out the enjoyment of a crown to a ſomewhat greater length. But no honours, purchaſed by ſuch crimes, could give any real enjoyment. His cruelty heaped confuſion upon himſelf, whilſt it opened the gate of happineſs to thoſe, who felt its ſtroke: nor could it rage beyond the bounds, that God had ſet it: amidſt the thouſands of ſlaughtered innocents, He alone eſcaped, who alone was aimed at.

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No malicious efforts of the wicked can ever fruſtrate the decrees of God: their hatred or their love become, as he pleaſes to direct, the inſtruments of his holy deſigns: the whole world, combined with all the powers of darkneſs, can never ſtop the execution of what an omnipotent Providence has once decreed. If once aſſured of the divine will, we have but to follow it without fear: if in the ſtation of our duty we have any thing to ſuffer, the ſuffering will be to our advantage. Bleſſed are they, who ſuffer for juſtice ſake. Herod's cruelty became the glory of the Innocents: his ſword could hurt their bodies only; their ſouls were ſanctified by the effuſion of their blood; their memory thro' every age is celebrated on earth; they reign eternally with God in heaven.

§ XIII. *Jeſus amidſt the Doctors. Luke 2.*

A. D. 12. JESUS CHRIST remained no longer in Egypt, than was neceſſary to decline the ſword of his perſecutors. Upon the death of Herod, an Angel of the Lord appeared again to Joſeph, as the head of the family, and bade him return into the land of Iſrael. With the ſame ready deference to this ſecond order, as he had paid to the firſt, Saint Joſeph began his journey back into his native country. Being informed, that Archilaus had ſucceeded his father in the kingdom of Judea, and fearing for the ſafety of the divine treaſure, which he carried with him, he avoided the territory of Judea, and went by divine admonition to Nazareth, which was ſituated in the province of Galilee, from whence our bleſſed Saviour was called a Nazarean, as the Prophets had foretold. The Evangeliſts make no mention of what Jeſus did from the time of his infancy to that of his baptiſm, except one thing, which happened, when he was twelve years of age. Beſides that interior homage, which the bleſſed Virgin paid to God within the ſecret cloſet of her heart, ſhe punctually performed thoſe public duties of religion, which were in practice

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at that time: ſhe went regularly every year with Jeſus and Joſeph to Jeruſalem at the feaſt of Eaſter, that ſhe might perform her devotions in the Temple, as the Law directed. On one of thoſe occaſions it happened, and it was in the twelfth year of Jeſus's age, that ſhe loſt her ſon. For the eighth and laſt day of the feſtival being over, ſhe ſet out with her ſpouſe to return to Nazareth, and the child Jeſus remained in Jeruſalem without their knowing it; they thought he had been in company with their kinsfolks and acquaintance, who were returning homeward on the ſame day. But when they met at night, the Child was not to be found. The afflicted parents therefore not finding him, went back next morning to Jeruſalem, and ſought him there. With great anxiety and grief of mind they made diligent ſearch after him, but had not the comfort to find him. On the third day, as they entered the Temple, behold! Jeſus was ſitting amongſt the doctors of the Law, aſking them queſtions, and anſwering in his turn, to the great aſtoniſhment of all, that heard him. Mary forgot her griefs the moment ſhe ſaw her Son: the very ſight of her divine Jeſus filled her ſoul with tranſports of joy, and ſhe ſaid, Son, why haſt thou done ſo to us? Behold, thy father and I in ſorrow have been ſeeking thee. And why were you ſeeking me, replied the Son? Did you not know, that I was to be, where the buſineſs of my Father called me? The anſwer admitted of no reply: it is pointed full at thoſe worldly parents, who unhappily try to divert their children from the ſervice of their Creator.

The hiſtory of Jeſus's life from this period to the thirtieth year of his age, is comprized by the Evangeliſt in this ſhort ſentence, He went down with them to Nazareth, and was ſubject to them. It is the ſentence, which Saint Auſtin dwells much upon in his inſtructions to children; a ſentence, which teaches them at once to know, and to love the obedience, which they owe their parents. Jeſus, ſays Saint Luke, advanced in wiſdom and age, and grace with God and men.

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The whole creation, says Saint Austin, was subject to Jesus Christ; and Jesus Christ, whom all things obey, was obedient to his parents. Parents also have their lesson of instruction in this story. The anxiety, which the blessed Virgin expressed in seeking her Son, teaches parents, how they are to act, when their children leave them, not to employ themselves in the business of their heavenly Father, as Jesus did in the Temple, but to lose themselves in the labyrinths of a licentious world. It behoves them to use every serious endeavour, that they think expedient to bring the delinquents back to a sense of their duty; it behoves them to enter the house of God with the spirit of Mary, to seek and pray for the salvation of those, whom they have brought into the world for no other end, than that they may hereafter be happy with God in heaven.

§ XIV. *Baptism of Jesus Christ. Mat.* 3.

A. D. 31. IN the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, while Jesus was still private in the house of Nazareth, John the Baptist began to preach aloud to the people, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make streight his paths; for every valley shall be filled, every mountain and hill shall be made low, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. The holy Prophet, being inspired by the Lord, went forth from the desert, where he had lived for some time more like an Angel than a man, and preached to all, as he went along thro' the country of Judea. The people flocked from Jerusalem and the other towns to hear his exhortations. In terms the most persuasive he exhorted them to do penance, and as a sign of their repentance he baptised them in the river Jordan, by which he strove to dispose their minds for the more perfect baptism of Him, whose precursor he was. The austerity of his life, and the lustre of his virtues gained him the confidence and attention of his hearers: he was listened to as a wonderful servant of God, and respected as a great Prophet.

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The people in general had conceived so high an opinion of his sanctity, that many began to doubt, whether he were not the Christ, who from the testimony of the ancient Prophets was expected about that time. While the inhabitants of Judea thus crouded round the Baptist to hear his doctrine, and to be baptised by him in the Jordan, Jesus himself came from Galilee, being thirty years of age, and presented himself before John to be baptised, as tho' he had been a sinner, like the rest of men. The Baptist stood astonished at this profound humility of the Son of God, and refused to pour the water upon his sacred head, till he was first assured, that so it became them to fulfil all justice: in obedience to his blessed Lord, by whom he wished rather to be baptised, he at last consented to perform the holy ceremony, of which he humbly deemed himself unworthy. Jesus being baptised, forthwith came out of the river, and the eternal Father, who delights in exalting those, who humble themselves, gave honourable testimony of him before the multitude. For, behold! the heavens opened, and the Holy Ghost, in the mystic shape of a Dove, visibly descended upon the head of Jesus, and a voice at the same time was heard to say, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

The glory of Jesus Christ, as the holy Fathers remark, is founded in humility. An incarnate God humbled himself before man, that he might thereby repair the injury, which man, by aspiring too high, had offered to the eternal Father. Jesus, the most exalted of men, put himself upon a level with the lowest; tho' impeccable by nature, and the very source of innocence, he disdained not the character and appearance of a sinner; whilst we, sinners as we are, affect the show of innocence, and vainly strive to appear better than we are.

§ XV.

§ XV. *Jesus Christ in the Wilderness. Mat.* 4.

A. D. 31. AS soon as Jesus was baptised, he began by example to teach those, who in process of time were to be baptised in his name, what virtues they are to study, what trials and temptations they are to expect. He retired, or as the text expresses it, he was led by the holy Spirit into the wilderness, where far from the noise of men, he addicted himself to silent prayer and fasting for forty days together, and was then tempted by the Devil. That haughty spirit not being able to persuade himself, that a God could lie concealed under the form of such human weakness, and yet doubting, as it seems, in what sense he was to understand the voice, which had declared him to be the Son of God, resolved to try, if he could draw the secret from him. For this purpose he assumed some corporeal form, and artfully concealing, as he fancied, the malice of his intention, addressed himself to Jesus in these words: If thou art the Son of God, command those stones to be changed into bread. Our blessed Saviour, who would not gratify the tempter's curiosity by any external sign of his divinity, answered him from the book of Deuteronomy, c. 8. Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word, that proceedeth from the mouth of God: by which answer our blessed Lord not only baffled the design of his infernal enemy, but has also given us an instructive lesson not to be afraid of exposing our lives to famine or to any other inconvenience in the divine service, but to be chiefly solicitous for that spiritual life, which is nourished by the word of God, by holy prayer, and those other helps, which the Eternal Word has instituted. Satan perceiving the little prospect he had of succeeding in a barren wilderness, where no tempting objects appeared to excite the senses, by a permissive power from God took our blessed Saviour and conveyed him to one of the pinnacles of the Temple. If thou art the Son of God, said he, cast thyself down; for as it is written, God hath appointed his Angels to take care of thee, and

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to bear thee up in their hands, leſt thou chance to daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone. With the ſame holy weapon, which he had ſo ſucceſsfully applied juſt before, Jeſus Chriſt defeated his enemy a ſecond time, and cited another paſſage out of the ſame book of Deuteronomy, c. 6. where it is ſaid, Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God. This ſecond rebuff provoked the Devil's anger, at the ſame time that it confounded his pride. He hitherto had covered his malice under ſome ſhow of reſpect, as if he were ſpeaking to the Son of God; he then threw off the maſk, and ſpoke in a ſtile, that denoted nothing but the empty boaſt and lying promiſes of a fallen Angel. He carried our Saviour to the ſummit of a high mountain, from whence he ſhowed him the kingdoms of the earth, with the ſhining riches and magnificence thereof: all this, ſaid he, I will give thee, if thou wilt fall down and adore me. The preſumptuous ſpirit promiſed more than he could perform; a ſingle ſentence diſcomfited him in a moment. Avaunt, Satan, ſaid Jeſus Chriſt; for it is written, Thou ſhalt adore the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve. Satan departed that inſtant, and Angels came and miniſtered to the Lord.

The temptations, which Jeſus Chriſt was pleaſed to undergo in the wilderneſs, have been conſidered by his followers as a ſubject, both of conſolation and inſtruction. By example he has taught them how to fight againſt their ſpiritual enemies, and to conquer too: the ſtruggle may be painful, while it laſts; heavenly comforts ſoon ſucceed. Let us love retirement, ſay the holy Fathers; let us faſt and pray, and the Devil cannot hurt us. With a lively faith let us meditate upon the word of God, and it will furniſh us with an impenetrable ſhield againſt the fiery darts of our enemy. Let us put our truſt in Jeſus Chriſt, the vanquiſher of his enemies, and temptations will but ſerve to ſtrengthen our virtues and increaſe our crown.

§ XVI. *Marriage at Cana in Galilee. John 2.*

A. D. 31. WHEN Jesus Christ had spent forty days in the exercises of private devotion, and by that had taught his followers in what manner they are to prepare themselves for public actions in the divine service, he left the wilderness, and began to manifest himself to the world. He directed his way to the river Jordan, where his precursor was still preaching and baptising. The Baptist saw him coming, and exclaimed, Behold the Lamb of God! behold Him, who taketh away the sins of the world! Two of John's disciples, one of whom was Andrew, were particularly struck at the words they heard, and wished to be acquainted with the person, of whom their master gave so singular a testimony. They took an opportunity to follow Jesus, as he went away, and asked him, where he lived: Jesus invited them to come and see: they accordingly accompanied him to the place of his abode, and remained with him that day. Andrew in his return back met Simon his brother, and telling him that he had found the Messias, introduced him to Jesus. Jesus fixed his eye upon Simon, and told him, that he should be called Cephas, which is to say, Peter. From that time the number of Jesus's followers began to increase, and his name was much talked of in the country, though he had not yet wrought any public miracle in testimony of his divine mission. Being at Cana, a town in Galilee, he and his disciples were invited to a marriage feast: Mary his mother was also there. During the entertainment the wine failed, which being observed by the blessed Virgin, she mentioned it to Jesus, whose power she knew was equal to his charity. The answer she received, might perchance be construed into a refusal by any one less acquainted, than Mary was with the designs of her divine Son: she told the waiters to do what Jesus should direct them, and it quickly appeared, that her request was granted. There stood six stone pitchers, containing each of them two or three measures. Jesus bade the waiters fill them with water,

water, and they filled them up to the brim: he then ordered them to pour out, and carry some of it to the chief steward of the feast. The steward tasted it, and being ignorant of the wonderful change it had undergone, expressed his surprize to the bridegroom, who contrary to the common custom, as he thought, had kept his good wine to the last.

This was the first miracle, says Saint John, by which Jesus manifested his glory, and strengthened the faith of his disciples: and it was wrought at the request of Mary the mother of Jesus. The different sorts of wine, that were produced on this occasion, the one by the bridegroom, and the other by Jesus Christ, mark the different delights of a spiritual, and of a worldly life. Worldly pleasures seem pleasant to the taste of carnal men; they flatter the senses, they amuse and entertain, while they last, but they last not long; they are soon drained out with life, and often leave a bitter emptiness behind them. The pleasures of a spiritual life are sweetened by the grace of Jesus Christ, and convey to the soul an inexpressible satisfaction, a solid and a lasting peace, such as is not to be found in the turbulent joys of sinners. When a devout soul has once begun to taste the sweets of such a peace, she shuts her eyes to those objects which cannot be pursued with innocence; she reposes in the calm of an upright conscience, she keeps her last end constantly in view, she relishes only the things of God, and breathes after an happiness, that shall never be exhausted.

§ XVII. *Nicodemus. John* 3.

THE first miracle of our blessed Saviour was soon after followed by many more, *A. D.* 31. which raised a high opinion of him amongst the people, and spread his reputation thro' the country. The rich as well as the poor, the learned and ignorant, became informed of the extraordinary things, that Jesus said and did. Nicodemus, a principal man amongst the Jews, sought

ſought a conference with him in private: for being afraid of declaring himſelf the public follower of a teacher, who was likely to meet with great oppoſition, he came to Jeſus by night: he ſaluted him with the honourable appellation of Maſter, and frankly confeſſed, that the evidence of his miracles left no room to doubt of his being ſent by God for the inſtruction of mankind. Our bleſſed Saviour expreſſed no notice of the encomiums he received from the Jewiſh doctor, and tho' he knew him to be a man of learning and repute amongſt the Phariſees, he nevertheleſs entertained him upon thoſe more humble ſubjects of doctrine, which are moſt oppoſite to the conceits of human pride: he ſpoke to him of the neceſſity of humility, and a docile obedience to the heavenly truths, poſitively declaring, that unleſs a man ſhould be born anew, he could have no part with him in the kingdom of God. Nicodemus, with all his learning, was at a loſs to know, what Jeſus meant, and aſked, how it were poſſible for a man to return into his mother's womb and be born anew? For the knowledge of that learned Doctor in Iſrael extended not beyond the dead letter of the Law, as Saint Auſtin obſerves, nor could the utmoſt ſtretch of his reaſonings dive into the depth of divine faith. Our bleſſed Saviour explained to him the nature of that ſecond birth, which was to be in water and the holy Spirit. The Spirit, ſaid he, breathes where it pleaſes, and of himſelf no man can tell, from whence or whither it goeth. Nicodemus owned his ignorance concerning thoſe ſpiritual matters, and was convinced, that human reaſon, however capable of underſtanding the motives of credibility, can never comprehend the ſecrets of thoſe ſublime truths, which it is obligated to believe. The ineffable myſtery of the divine and human nature united together in one perſon, the exaltation of the ſon of man upon the croſs, the great love, which God had ſhown to men, ſince to make them eternally happy, he did not ſpare his only begotten Son, were points, which our bleſſed Redeemer propoſed to Nicodemus for his belief, as neceſſary for his eternal welfare. But men, ſaid he, prefer darkneſs to light:

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conscious of their evil deeds, they shun the light not to see their guilt: fond of their ignorance, they studiously avoid the instructions, that might otherwise help them to discover the truth, and correct their errors. Nicodemus was sincere in his search after truth; he found it, and embraced it. A fear of what the world would say, made him ashamed at first of appearing in the company of Jesus Christ by day; he came to consult him by night. He had the courage afterwards not only to declare himself publicly, but also to plead for his divine Master before the Council, and to express his disapprobation of the bloody sentence, which condemned him to the cross. Nor did he relent either in his courage, or in his love for Jesus, after the ignominy of his passion; he assisted Joseph of Arimathea in taking down the sacred body from the cross; he helped to embalm, and lay it in the sepulchre.

From these progressive steps, which Nicodemus made in the way of virtue, the holy Fathers take occasion to say, that we are not immediately to despair of those timid souls, who dare not at first declare themselves in favour of the truth. Great allowances must be made for human weakness; we must know how to counsel the doubtful, and compassionate the feeble. Reflection perchance may dissipate their fears, and give them courage: in secret silence they may consider the eternal truths, the grace of God may at the same time work within their souls, and inspire them with fortitude, so that they no longer fear or blush to show themselves in the cause of Jesus Christ.

§ XVIII. *The Samaritan woman. John 4.*

THE frequent miracles, that accompanied the preaching of our blessed Saviour, drew vast numbers after him, and his followers became much more numerous, than those of the Baptist. The great precursor had finished the chief object of his mission: he

A. D. 31.

he had baptiſed, he had preached, he had pointed out the Meſſias to his hearers. A deſire of reclaiming ſinners from their evil courſes had firſt drawn him from his retreat in the deſert, and the ſame deſire then drew him to Herod's court. That prince had a great eſteem of the holy man, whom he loved and revered as a Prophet: he took a pleaſure in hearing him diſcourſe; he did many good things by his advice, and patiently bore his reproofs upon the ſubject of an inceſtuous marriage, which he had contracted with his brother's wife. The adultreſs would ſuffer no control: fired with luſt, and inſtigated by the jealous Phariſees againſt the Baptiſt, ſhe firſt procured his impriſonment and then his death. Our bleſſed Saviour perceiving the ferment, which agitated the people's minds, on that account, retired for a time out of the confines of Judea into Galilee. In his way he paſſed thro' Samaria, near the town of Sichar, where he had an intereſting converſation with a Samaritan woman, who came to fetch water from Jacob's well. Spent with heat and the fatigue of his journey, Jeſus was reſting himſelf upon the well, when the woman came. He was thirſty, tho' his thirſt ſeems to have been more myſterious, than natural, and he aſked her to let him drink. The woman was ſurpriſed to hear herſelf accoſted by a native of Judea, for the Jews had no communication with the Samaritans, and ſaid, How doeſt thou, being a Jew, aſk of me to drink, who am a Samaritan woman? If thou didſt but know the gift of God, replied our bleſſed Saviour, and who the perſon is, who deſires thee to give him water to drink, thou perhaps wouldſt have aſked of him, and he would have given thee living water, of which whoſoever drinketh ſhall not thirſt for ever. For the water, that I will give, ſhall become a perpetual fountain ſpringing up unto life everlaſting. She deſired he would give her of that water, that ſhe might not thirſt nor be obliged to come to the well again. Our bleſſed Saviour made no anſwer to her petition, but changing the diſcourſe mentioned ſome paſt actions of her life, by which ſhe diſcovered him to be a Prophet: ſhe therefore deſired him to tell her, which of the two Temples, whether

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that in Jeruſalem, or that upon the mountain of Garizim in Samaria, were the true place of divine worſhip. Jeſus anſwered, that the time was at hand, when adoration ſhould be no longer paid to God either in the Temple of Jeruſalem, or on the mountain of Samaria, and that the true adorers ſhould adore the Father in ſpirit and in truth. We know the Meſſias is coming, ſaid the woman, and he will inſtruct us in all theſe matters. He is already come, replied our Saviour, and I am He. The woman upon that left her pitcher, and haſtened into the town to inform them of the wonderful Prophet, ſhe had found. The citizens went forth to ſee and invite him into the town. He accepted of their invitation, remained two days amongſt them, and many believed in him.

The holy Fathers admire the condeſcenſion of our bleſſed Saviour on this occaſion, in which he diſdained not to enter into converſation with a Samaritan woman upon a ſubject the moſt important, and to impart to her the whole ſecret of the new Law. He informed her and all mankind, that true piety conſiſts not in an empty name, or in the mere performance of ſome outward ceremony in the Temple of Jeruſalem, or on the mountain of Samaria, but in an unfeigned goodneſs of heart, which adores the Father in truth. How ſacred ſoever thoſe material edifices may be, which are dedicated to the divine ſervice, more ſacred are the living Temples of our ſouls and bodies, which have been conſecrated to God in baptiſm. They then became the dwelling of the Holy Ghoſt, and thro' the grace of Jeſus Chriſt we ought to take care that they always remain ſo, by rendering to God the ſincere homage of our actions and deſires in the true ſpirit of religion.

§ XIX. *The ſtorm appeaſed. Mat.* 8.

JESUS upon his arrival in the province of Galilee, began to preach publicly, and to exhort his hearers to do penance, becauſe the kingdom of heaven drew near. He viſited the town of Ca- *A. D.* 31.

pharnaum, and sought by his holy word to open the eyes of its blind inhabitants. But they obstinately rejected the light, that was offered them, they preferred error to truth, and by an abuse of divine goodness rendered themselves more criminal, than they were before. They stopped their ears against the exhortations, that were made them, and refused the evidence of miracles, that were wrought for their conviction. For in confirmation of his heavenly doctrine, our blessed Saviour during his stay amongst them healed the Centurion's servant, who lay at the point of death; he cured Saint Peter's mother-in-law of a scorching fever; he delivered many from the evil spirits, that had possessed them; and all, that were sick, he restored to perfect health. The fame of these miraculous cures, which the ungrateful citizens of Capharnaum did not duly attend to, brought vast crouds of people thither from other parts of the country, some to hear his doctrine, some to see his miracles, and others to beg redress in their corporal infirmities. This concourse of people naturally flattered the disciples, who thought themselves sharers of the honours and respect, that were paid to their divine Master. For by this time there were many, who followed Jesus Christ, and publicly professed themselves his disciples. Wherefore to train them by degrees to the labours and hardships, that are inseparable from the divine service, and to convince them that they were not to follow him upon the motives of worldly advantages and popular applause, he took them into a boat, and put off to sea. He composed himself to sleep, and in the interim a violent storm arose, which covered the boat with waves, and threatened them with an approaching shipwreck. Terrified at the danger, the disciples ran to Jesus and awaked him, saying, Save us, Lord, or we perish. He rebuked them for their fears, and want of faith; then rising up, he commanded the winds and the sea, and behold! a great calm presently ensued. The disciples lost their fears, and wondering, exclaimed, Who is this? For even the winds and sea obey him!

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The veſſel, on which our bleſſed Saviour was embarked, is, according to Saint Auſtin, an emblem of the Church, which amidſt the troubles of a wicked world, is, as it were beaten, by the waves of a boiſterous ſea. She ſeems at times to be ſo violently toſſed and agitated by the ſtorms of adverſity, that if Jeſus Chriſt had not promiſed to be always with her, we ſhould be inclined to think her loſt. Almighty God permits ſuch ſtorms to riſe, leſt the calm enjoyment of the world might make us forget the heavenly country, to which we always ought to ſteer. By thoſe trials he intends to rouſe our ſleeping faith, to awaken our confidence in him, and to remind us of his promiſed protection. For at the ſame time, that he forewarns us of the tribulations, we muſt unavoidably meet with, he alſo tells us not to fear. Having provided us with a bark, wherein to work our paſſage thro' this ſtormy world, he knows how to conduct us ſafe into the wiſhed-for port. No ſhipwreck is to be apprehended by them, who ſeek their protection from God by holy prayer. The more violent the trial is, the more earneſt ought to be our prayer. If Jeſus Chriſt is with us, what ſhall we fear? If God is for us, what harm can we receive? Our chief apprehenſion ought to be, leſt our diffidence in God, or our remiſſneſs in prayer may render us leſs deſerving of our Saviour's goodneſs.

§ XX. *The Demoniack cured. Mark* 5.

JESUS CHRIST having ſhown his diſciples, that the boiſterous elements were under his command, went aſhore on the other ſide of the water, in the country of the Garaſens, where he gave a convincing proof, that his power over the infernal ſpirits was not leſs abſolute. Of the many demoniacks, that are mentioned by the Evangeliſts, there is one, whom Saint Mark has deſcribed more particularly; and the deſcription gives us an idea of the power and diſmal tyranny, which the devils were permitted at that time to exerciſe upon the bodies, as well as the ſouls of men. This miſerable man being tranſported out of himſelf by *A. D.* 31.

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the ſpirit, that poſſeſſed him, had ſtript off his clothes, and burſting from confinement ran wild and naked thro' the country. No human force could tame, and no chains were ſtrong enough to bind him. He ſkulked among the tombs of the dead, and roved about the mountains, howling day and night, and tearing his fleſh to pieces with the ſtones. His fierce and ſavage yells frightened every body from the place, where he was. Happening to be near the ſpot, where our bleſſed Saviour came aſhore with his diſciples, he ran and adored him, crying with a loud voice, What have I to do with thee Jeſus, the Son of the moſt high God? I adjure thee by the name of God, that thou torment me not. For Jeſus had commanded him to go out of the man; and to be compelled to obey the commands of a God man, was a tormenting thought to the proud ſpirit. Jeſus aſked him his name; not becauſe he was ignorant of it himſelf, ſay the holy Fathers, but becauſe he would impart to his followers a knowledge, which ſhould ſtrike them with a profitable fear. The ſpirit anſwered, that his name was Legion, becauſe they were many; and he entreated our bleſſed Saviour not to drive him out of the country, but permit him to enter into the herd of ſwine, that were feeding on the mountain. It was granted; and the ſwine, to the number of two thouſand, being inſtantly poſſeſſed by the whole Legion, ran headlong down the precipice into the ſea, and were drowned. The fact was immediately divulged thro' the country, and crouds of people flocked to the place, where they were aſtoniſhed to ſee the man, who had been troubled by the devil, now clothed and ſitting like a lamb at the feet of Jeſus. Penetrated with a grateful ſenſe of the mercy he had received, the poor man would willingly have remained with his divine deliverer; but Jeſus bade him return home to his friends, and publiſh the wonderful favour God had done him.

This demoniack, according to the holy Fathers, exhibits a ſtriking figure of thoſe unhappy ſinners, who by a habit of vice fly from the fellowſhip of the Saints, ſtrip themſelves of the robes of ſanctifying grace, and ſit naked in the ſtate of deadly ſin, far from thoſe heavenly manſions,

manſions, which have been purchaſed for them by the blood of their Redeemer. Hurried away by the violence of lawleſs paſſions, they run wild in the purſuit of ſenſual enjoyments, forget their laſt end, and break every moral and religious tie, that tends to reſtrain them in the deſires of their corrupt hearts. Wallowing in the mire of animal delights, and ruſhing headlong into the gulf of endleſs perdition, they ſtand in need of a miracle of grace to free them from their wretched ſlavery, and reſtore them to the peace, which no man can enjoy, as long as he is at variance with his God.

§ XXI. *The Paralytic. Mat.* 9.

OUR bleſſed Saviour re-embarked, at the requeſt of the Geraſens, and returned to the coaſt of Capharnaum. Notwithſtanding the many wonders, which Jeſus Chriſt had wrought in and about the town of Capharnaum, we read but of one perſon, who was converted there, and that was Matthew the publican. This man by following the divine call became an Apoſtle, while the reſt of his fellow citizens remained in their incredulity, and thereby became more guilty in the ſight of God, than the ancient inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha. Drawn by the ſweet attractives of divine grace, Matthew left his lucrative employ to accompany Chriſt the Son of God. Happy within himſelf on account of the favour he had found with his Creator, he wiſhed to ſee the ſame grace extended to others of his acquaintance. For that purpoſe he invited Jeſus to his houſe, & many publicans & ſinners ſat down with him at table. The Phariſees, who profeſſed the minuteſt nicety in their external obſervance of the law, affected to be ſcandalized, and aſked the diſciples, why their Maſter eat and drank with publicans and ſinners. Jeſus heard what they ſaid and made them this reply: For them, who are well, there needeth no phyſician; the ſick only want the phyſicians help: go therefore and learn

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the meaning of the ſentence, *I will have mercy and not ſacrifice*, for I am not come to call the juſt, but ſinners.

Whilſt our bleſſed Saviour remained at Capharnaum, he wrought a noted miracle in favour of a paralytic. The ſick man, being too infirm to be taken out of bed, was carried to the houſe, where Jeſus was: not being able to gain admittance on account of the throng, his friends hoiſted him up, as he lay upon his bed, and uncovering the roof of the houſe let him down into the room before our bleſſed Saviour's feet. Jeſus was pleaſed with this teſtimony of their faith, encouraged the ſick man to be of good heart, and told him, his ſins were forgiven him. The Scribes and Phariſees, who were preſent, ſecretly conſtrued the words into blaſphemy, as expreſſing a power in man, which belonged ſolely to God. Jeſus, to whom their moſt ſecret thoughts were as perfectly known, as tho' they had been declared by word of mouth, ſuddenly aſked them, if it were not as eaſy for him to tell the man, that his ſins were forgiven him, as to bid him riſe from his bed and walk? And to convince them, that he had the power of doing both the one and the other, he ſaid to the paralytic, Riſe, take up thy bed, and walk. The paralytic roſe, and the ſpectators full of admiration at the miracle, returned thanks to God, who had given ſuch power to men.

Chriſtians are daily in the occaſion of admiring the ſame power, and of thanking God for the ſame goodneſs, which he ſtill continues to mankind. Jeſus Chriſt, as man, had received from his Father the power of forgiving ſins, and that power he has imparted to his delegates in the ſacred miniſtry. By that ſingular privilege, which he communicated to his Apoſtles on the very day of his reſurrection, Jeſus Chriſt has raiſed the Prieſts of his Church above the common rank of men; by that he inſtruſts them with a power, which he has not granted even to the Angels; by that he has appointed them to be the judges and phyſicians of our ſouls; by that they become our ſpiritual fathers, and from them we receive a more happy generation, than what we have received from our corporal parents; by that they are qualified to inſtruct

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and direct us to eternal life; they speak and determine in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, whose ministers they are. It is our duty to hear, to respect and honour them: it is to them we must have recourse, as often as we stand in need of being loosed from our sins.

XXII. *Election of the twelve Apostles.* *Luke 6.*

WHEN our blessed Saviour had employed upwards of twelve months in preaching, baptising and working miracles, he began to manifest his care for the establishment of his Church thro' all succeeding ages. Out of his numerous followers he selected twelve, whom he purposed to employ in the conversion of the Gentiles. Having once chosen them from the common class of believers, he by a second election raised them to a superior class amongst his disciples, by which he clearly intimated, that the virtues, he expected from them, were to be of a much higher perfection, than what he expected from the rest of his disciples. By this sublime vocation the Apostles became the domestic companions, and familiar friends of their blessed Lord, living with him under the same roof, and eating at the same table. This let them into the secrets of our blessed Redeemer's hidden life; this gave them an opportunity of conversing more intimately with him, and being witnesses not only of his public, but also of his private virtues. To them he opened himself more freely, and explained at large those points of doctrine and morality, which he communicated to the people in parables. To inform his Church of the manner and dispositions he would have her observe in the future election of her ministers, Jesus Christ retired to a lonely mountain, where he watched and prayed the whole night. When it was day, he called his disciples round him, out of whom he selected twelve, and named them Apostles, viz. Simon, surnamed Peter, Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew

Matthew and Thomas, James the ſon of Alpheus, and Simon who is called Zelotes, and Jude the brother of James, and Judas Iſcariot, who became a traitor.

Jeſus ſat down in the midſt of them, and made that admirable diſcourſe, which is recorded by Saint Matthew, and contains a neat abridgment of the whole Goſpel. He ſets off in direct oppoſition to thoſe maxims, which are generally adopted in the world, and pronounces thoſe happy, who by men are commonly accounted unhappy. He ſhows, how imperfect the ordinances were of the old Law in compariſon of what he ſhould exact from his followers in the new: that unleſs their virtues ſhould be more full than thoſe of the Scribes and Phariſees, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven, that he ſhould require perfection from them not only in their outward actions, but alſo in their very thoughts and deſires; that it would not be enough to have the appearance or the knowledge of virtue; that a ſhining outſide might indeed ſatisfy the eyes of men, but that no outward ſhow without a real goodneſs of the heart would be acceptable to God. Therefore in the ſequel of his diſcourſe he inſiſts upon an upright and a pure intention, which is, as it were the eye, that enlightens and directs the body of their actions. He tells them to ſtrive by virtuous deeds to lay up for themſelves a treaſure in heaven, which no ruſt or moth can conſume, and no length of time deſtroy; that where their treaſure is, there alſo will be their hearts; that their firſt concern muſt be to ſeek the kingdom of God, and fulfil his commands; that to prevent all ſolicitude and anxious care about the the goods of this world their heavenly Father will provide them with every neceſſary in life, and crown them after death with eternal glory; that as they have but one ſupreme Maſter to ſerve, their ſervice cannot be divided between two, and that to ſerve God and the world together is a thing impoſſible.

From theſe eſtabliſhed principles, as they are laid down by the great Maſter of perfection, it appears, that the end of the Chriſtian Law is to repair the old man, and to perfect the new. A purity of intention, and a ſincere

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desire of pleasing God should animate a Christian in all he does, and in all he desires. To abstain from bad actions in public, that he might have the appearance of being good, was enough for a Pharisee, whose ambition was to gain the applause of men; but by a Christian, who reflects, that he is ever in the presence of an all-seeing God, the object to be aimed at and pursued is real virtue, which teaches him not to rest in the outward letter of the Law, but to sanctify each action by the inward purity of his motive.

§ XXIII. *Christ upon the mountain. Mat. 6.*

OUR divine Teacher in his discourse to the people upon the mountain descends from general principles to particular, and specifies the virtues, which he expects to see in his faithful followers: a purity of intention, a desire of pleasing God in all things, fraternal love, meekness, pardon of injuries, diligence in prayer, a serious endeavour at Salvation, a perfect observance of his commandments, and a cleanness of heart free not only from deadly sins, but also, as much as may be, from those lesser transgressions, which tarnish the beauty of the Soul, and lead her by degrees towards the infernal precipice. For whoever is unfaithful in little things, will be likewise unfaithful in greater things, and if he slights venial faults, he will fall insensibly into the most enormous. It therefore is no trivial matter, it is an important point of Christian duty, which our blessed Saviour speaks of, when he so explicitly condemns every deliberate motion of anger in the heart, and so rigorously forbids even the desire of an object, which we cannot lawfully enjoy. The Jews chiefly sought to please the eyes of men, who judge by what they see; the followers of Christ must seek to please the eyes of God, who beholds the heart. To shun the track of disgraceful crimes requires no great effort from a sober man, but to stifle the desires, that flatter corrupt nature, and

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and to break every unruly paſſion in obedience to the law, is the exerciſe of Chriſtian fortitude. To love a friend or a benefactor is the reſult of natural reaſon, it is no more, than what heathens do: but to love our enemies, and to do good to thoſe, who perſecute and ſlander us, is the virtue of Chriſt's Goſpel. It is what Chriſt teaches us in his very firſt ſermon; it is what he ſtrongly inſiſts upon; it is, what renders us like to our heavenly Father, who ſhowers down his favours upon the undeſerving, & makes the ſun equally riſe upon the good & wicked. To do, as we would have others do to us, is another grand principle, which our bleſſed Saviour has marked out for our conduct in life, and if it were once adopted in practice, as well as in ſpeculation, we ſhould hear no complaints of one neighbour againſt another, no injuries, no ſlanders, no calumnies, nor raſh judgments. Raſh judgments are ſeverely condemned by our bleſſed Lord. In the heart of man there often is a natural inclination to judge of others, and the judgments we form, are oftentimes as raſh, as they are unjuſt. For the ſame ſelf-love, which lurks within us, inclines us as much to magnify our neighbour's faults, as to diminiſh our own; blind, as hypocrites, we diſcern not the moſt glaring miſdemeanors in ourſelves, whilſt we deſcry the ſlighteſt defects in our brethren.

If we did but oftener reflect upon that dreadful judgment, which all muſt one day undergo, we ſhould not be ſo haſty to judge our brethren, ſay the holy Fathers, much leſs ſhould we make their faults the ſubject of our converſations. If the duty of fraternal charity has not force enough to check our raſhneſs, fear at leaſt ought to furniſh us with motives ſufficient to put us upon our guard. The way to find mercy before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt is to ſhow it now. For in the ſame weight and meaſure, as we deal with others, Jeſus Chriſt will deal with us. Judge not, that you may not be judged: condemn not, and you ſhall not be condemned.

§ XXII. *The Leper and Centurion. Luke 7.*

OUR bleſſed Saviour, having finiſhed his diſcourſe upon the mountain, went down into the plain, being attended by his diſciples, and the numerous crouds, that followed him. A Leper ſaw him coming, and being actuated by a lively faith and hope of being healed, reſpectfully approached, and proſtrated himſelf before him. Like an humble ſupplicant, he did but intimate the nature of his complaint, and for his cure reſigned himſelf entirely to the will of Him, whoſe power he confeſſed: it is the example, we are to follow, as often as we pray. He only ſaid, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canſt make me clean. And Jeſus ſtretching forth his hand to touch him, anſwered, I will; be thou healed. The will of God is the ſource of every grace, that we receive; the leper was that inſtant cleanſed; but to teach that due ſubordination, which the law preſcribed to ſuperior powers, our bleſſed Lord bade him go and ſhow himſelf to the prieſt, and offer the gift, as it was ordained by Moyſes. *A. D.* 32.

Jeſus went to Capharnaum, where he was deſired to ſhow his healing power in favour of a Centurion's ſervant. The Centurion, tho' a Roman, had a high opinion of Jeſus Chriſt, and thought himſelf unworthy of approaching him in perſon. He had done many good ſervices to the Jewiſh nation, and made himſelf many friends amongſt the citizens of Capharnaum: to them he communicated his diſtreſs on account of his ſick ſervant, and begged they would interceed in his behalf with Jeſus. The ancients of the Jews undertook to preſent his petition, and at their requeſt our bleſſed Saviour went towards the Centurion's houſe. The Centurion, whoſe humility was equal to his faith, deemed himſelf unworthy to receive, or even to ſpeak to ſo great a gueſt: he deſired ſome of his friends to meet Jeſus, and to ſay in his name, Lord I am not worthy, that thou ſhouldeſt enter under my roof, ſay but the word, and my ſervant ſhall be healed. The words are very expreſſive of the ſentiments,

sentiments, which the Centurion nourished in his heart; they received the approbation of our blessed Saviour himself; they are adopted by the Catholic Church in the administration of the holy Eucharist, wherein the same Lord is truly and verily received by the faithful. Humility inspired the diffident Roman to employ the intercession of his Jewish friends, whom he thought more worthy than himself of Jesus's favours. It is the example we follow, when to obtain the divine blessing we address ourselves to God's more deserving friends both in heaven and on earth, whose prayers are more likely to be heard than ours. The Centurion's request was granted thro' the mediation of his friends, and Jesus healed his servant upon the spot, where they met him.

This charitable concern, which the Centurion showed for his dying servant, furnishes the holy Fathers with an opportunity of putting all Christian masters in mind of the care, which they are obliged to take of their servants, especially when they are sick: it is a duty which they owe them in charity: to neglect their domestic servants, either in their spiritual or in their temporal distress, is in the Apostle's language, to be worse than infidels. Masters never should forget, that they also have a Master in heaven, to whom the poor are as dear, as the rich, and with whom there is no exception of persons. If they expect to be mercifully dealt with by Almighty God, they should remember to be kind to those, whom he has placed in their service.

§ XXV. *The widow's son of Naim. Luke 7.*

A. D. 32. THE miraculous powers, which Jesus Christ had frequently exerted in favour of the sick, extended also to the dead. The first person restored to life, that we meet with in the Gospels, was the daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue. Jairus, it seems, neither had the faith, nor the humility of the Centurion; for he asked Jesus to come to his house, and thought it necessary that he should lay his hand

hand upon the deceased to raise her again to life. Our blessed Saviour was pleased to comply with Jairus's request, went to his house, bade the multitude retire, that were mourning round the corpse, took the maiden by the hand, and she rose up. The fame of this miracle was quickly spread thro' the whole country.

Our blessed Lord, in one of his excursions through Judea, went to a city called Naim; and when he came near the gate, behold, the corpse of a young man was carried out amidst the crowd of a numerous attendance to be buried. He was a widow's only son, snatched out of life in the flower of youth. Bathed in tears the disconsolate mother attended the funeral procession. Jesus saw her distress, was moved with compassion, approached and told her not to weep. She made no answer; the tears in abundance streamed from her eyes, and silently expressed the anguish of her heart. He advanced and laid his hand upon the bier: they, who carried it, stood still, and Jesus with emphasis exclaimed, Young man, I say to thee, Arise! Awaked, as it were, by the powerful call, the young man instantly arose, and began to speak. The spectators stood amazed, and glorified God, saying, A great Prophet is risen up among us, and God hath visited his people.

To men, who extend not their thoughts beyond what strikes their outward senses, it may seem, as if our blessed Saviour had met the funeral by chance, as it came out of the gates of Naim: but to the true believer it is evident, that nothing less than a premeditated design to raise the dead, carried him thither at that particular time. For as the holy Fathers observe in their comments upon this passage, nothing happens by accident in this world; all is directed by a watchful and unerring Providence, and what short-sighted mortals call chance, is the certain effect of a cause, permitted to act by the deliberate design of God. The holy Fathers moreover consider the love, which the mother bore for an only son, as a figure of that tender love, which the Church has for her children: with the warmest affection she embraces each one in particular, as if he were the only one, and with the

hand hopes

hopes of seeing them hereafter raised to eternal life, consoles herself amidst the cares and afflictions, that must necessarily befall her in this vale of tears. The spiritual death of many of them is a subject to her of continual sorrow. With a heavy heart she sees her thoughtless children snatched from her arms by unruly passions, and hurried away by a train of sins towards the fathomless abyss. She mourns their misfortune, and implores the pity of her heavenly spouse, that he may raise them again by his powerful grace. With that hope she comforts herself in her afflictions, and with a longing desire expects the hour, which is to restore her repenting sons to life again. The repentance of a sinner gives joy not only to the Church on earth, but also to the Saints and Angels, who are in heaven. For there is joy in heaven upon the repentance of every sinner.

§ XXVI. *Mary Magdalene. Luke 7.*

A. D. 32. THE surprising and frequent miracles of Jesus Christ being rumoured throughout Judea and the country round about, the people were struck with a reverential awe, and proclaimed him a great prophet. John the Baptist, who was during this time in prison, judged it a favourable opportunity to convince his disciples, that Jesus was the true Messias, and therefore sent two of them, as from himself, to ask him, whether he was not the person, whom the Prophets had foretold, and the Gentiles expected for their salvation? The conduct of our blessed Saviour on that occasion is very remarkable. He knew, how jealous those disciples were of their master's reputation, and how much afraid, lest any one should be thought greater than the Baptist; he therefore chose to say nothing, that might give them uneasiness or increase their jealousy: he spoke by his works, and wrought many miracles in their presence, then bade them return and tell John, what they had seen. When they were gone, Jesus began to commend the Baptist for his unparalleled virtues, for his

fortitude,

fortitude, for his unſhaken conſtancy and penitential life. He alſo ſpoke to the people upon the neceſſity of doing penance, which was to open to them the kingdom of heaven; for the kingdom of heaven requires violence, ſaid he, and the violent bear it away. Wo be to the cities of Corozain and Bethſaida; wo be to the town of Capharnaum, who have rejected thoſe graces, and remained inſenſible at thoſe miracles, which long ago would have moved the heatheniſh inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon to do penance in ſackcloth and aſhes. Bethania was more happy in the illuſtrious converſion of Magdalene, a noted ſinner in the city. This woman, who became henceforward as famous for her piety, as ſhe had hitherto been infamous for her diſorderly life, came to Jeſus, when he was at dinner in the houſe of Simon the leper. With a forwardneſs, which was only excuſable from the goodneſs of her intention, ſhe ruſhed into the room, and coming behind near to Jeſus's feet, threw herſelf upon the ground to kiſs and embrace them: then bathing them with her tears, ſhe perfumed them with a precious ointment, and wiped them with her hair. Simon, who was of the Phariſean ſect, began to think it very extraordinary, that Jeſus Chriſt, if he were a Prophet, ſhould not know the woman to be a ſinner; or if he did, that he ſhould let her come ſo near him. But he ſoon found, how preſumptuous he had been in forming ſuch judgments in his heart, and by the anſwers he gave to our bleſſed Saviour's queſtions, was forced to own his miſtake. Jeſus bade him obſerve the humble ſervices, which Magdalene had done him, ſince ſhe entered the room, commending her for the fervour of her charity and the activity of her faith, & declared, That many ſins were forgiven her, becauſe ſhe had loved much; he told her to depart in peace.

Mary Magdelene, ſay the holy Fathers, is the perfect model of a true penitent; from her heart ſhe deteſted the paſt irregularities of her life, ſhe bade adieu to ſin with a firm purpoſe never to relapſe again. In the work of her converſion ſhe employed the very things, which ſhe hitherto

hitherto had made ſubſervient to the work of ſin; her hair, her ointments, and perfumes, the paſt incentives of her paſſions, were piouſly ſacrificed to the exerciſe of penance. Abandoned as ſhe had been to habitual vice, ſhe became pure in the ſight of God, as ſoon as the fire of charity ſanctified her penitence, and refined her affections from the dregs of ſin.

§ XXVII. *Parable of the Sower. Mat.* 13.

A. D. 32. OUR bleſſed Saviour had one day ſat himſelf down on the ſea ſhore; vaſt crouds of people gathered round, and as they preſſed upon him, he ſtepped into a boat, and from thence made a long diſcourſe to them, as they ſtood upon the ſhore. He choſe to convey his inſtructions chiefly in parables and figures, according to the uſe and ſtile of language in thoſe countries. Amongſt other parables, he propoſed that of the ſower, which he diſtinguiſhed into four parts. A huſbandman, ſaid he, went forth to ſow his ſeed, of which ſome fell beyond the bounds of the field upon the highway, where it was either trodden under foot by travellers, or eaten by the birds. In the explication of this firſt part of the parable, as he delivered it afterwards in private to his Apoſtles, our bleſſed Saviour ſays, that the Seed is the word of God, and that they by the way ſide are the hearers, who forget the word, almoſt as ſoon as they have heard it. For the Devil comes immediately, and either by his own wicked ſuggeſtions, or by his agents, as ſo many fowls of the air, takes away the ſeed of ſalvation from their hearts, leſt it ſhould there quicken their faith, and produce the fruits of eternal life. The ſecond part of the parable is that, in which the ſeed is ſaid to fall upon a rock, where meeting with no depth of ſoil, it is burnt up by the ſun, almoſt as ſoon as it begins to ſpring. And theſe are they, ſays Chriſt, who at firſt ſeem pleaſed with the word of God, but having no great fund of goodneſs, forget it in the time of trial, and fly back at the approach

proach of temptation. Such perſons are very apt to deceive themſelves, and their illuſion is this: the pleaſure, which they ſeem to find in receiving the word of God, makes them fancy, that they want nothing more to produce the fruit of godlineſs in their ſouls; little thinking that a heart, which is not ſoftened by compunction and improved by works of piety, is incapable of producing any laſting good. The third part of the parable is that, in which the ſeed is ſaid to have fallen amongſt thorns: the thorns grew up, and choaked it. Such is the misfortune of thoſe, ſays our Lord, whoſe thoughts are taken up with the concerns of this world. They indeed hear the word of God, but the cares of life, their reſtleſs deſires, and worldly purſuits, ſtifle the growth of virtue in their ſouls, and prevent its fruit. On a heart, thus entangled and perplexed with deceitful riches, the ſacred word of God, whether written or delivered by his miniſters, has but little or no effect. The fourth and laſt diviſion of the parable marks the different produce of that part of the ſeed, which fell upon good ground. In ſome the increaſe was a hundred grains for one, in ſome it was ſixty, and in others only thirty. Such are the different degrees of goodneſs, which the word of God produces in the hearts of the faithful, according to the diſpoſitions, it there meets with. If the heart is but ſingly good, it will not ſhow itſelf by many heroic actions, and if not cultivated with continual care, it will be in danger of growing bad. For which reaſon it is our duty to ſtrive and pray daily, that we may become more and more perfect in the increaſe of charity and good works.

It is by patience, that we reap the fruit of our endeavours; it is by taking pains, that we advance in virtue; by ſufferings and by labour in the divine ſervice our charity becomes more vigorous. Charity is, as it were, the root of Chriſtian piety; from thence all other virtues draw their life, their nouriſhment, and beauty; the more vigorous the root, the richer will be the fruit it produces. Watered by the dew of heavenly graces, it will

will ſhoot up into an increaſe of thoſe ſhining virtues, which adorn the Church, and diſtinguiſh each induſtrious member in his reſpective ſtate and calling.

§ XXVIII. *Decollation of Saint John. Mark 6.*

A. D. 32. ALTHO' the doctrine of our bleſſed Saviour was ſo pure in its principles, ſo conformable to reaſon, ſo confirmed by miracles, and ſo pleaſing in its promiſes of eternal glory, yet few embraced it. A general incredulity and obduracy of heart prevailed in the cities of Judea, and in no city more than in that of Nazareth. It was natural to imagine, that the Nazareans would have thought themſelves in ſome ſort honoured by the fame of One, who had lived and grown up amongſt them, and that they would have cheriſhed him, as the moſt valuable of their citizens. Their behaviour was diametrically the oppoſite. They had ſeen and converſed with him from his youth; they knew no learning that he had acquired; in his figure they diſcovered nothing, that ſet him above the common level; in his mother and relations they beheld no title, that diſtinguiſhed him from the poorer claſs of people. To his doctrine therefore they would give no credit, nor would they allow his miracles, which they had not ſeen. The great reputation, which Jeſus had acquired amongſt others, made them jealous, and their jealouſy grew into a violent antipathy againſt him. They laid hands upon him, and led him to the ſteep point of the rock, on which their town was built, with an intention to throw him headlong down. But the hour for Jeſus to die was not yet come, and no human malice could advance it. He ſlipped out of their hands, and walked away thro' the midſt of them. This perverſe incredulity of the Nazareans hindered Jeſus from working any miracles amongſt them, excepting the cure of ſome of their ſick, which he did by impoſing his hands upon them. On his return from Nazareth he was informed of John the Baptiſt's death.

It

It has been already mentioned, that Saint John was caſt into priſon on account of the reprimand he gave to king Herod, for his inceſtuous connexions with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. Herodias had often ſolicited the king to have him put to death, and the king as often refuſed to conſent, not only from a principle of eſteem for the holy man, but likewiſe from fear of the people's reſentment, who venerated the Baptiſt as a wonderful prophet. But Herod's imprudence betrayed him ſoon after to commit the bloody deed. He celebrated his birth-day with great mirth & magnificence; a grand entertainment was prepared, and the chief men of Galilee were invited to attend: the daughter of Herodias was introduced before the company, and deſired to dance. The manner of her performance ſo pleaſed the king, that he haſtily promiſed upon oath to give her whatever ſhe ſhould aſk, tho' it were half his kingdom. The girl immediately left the room to conſult her mother, what ſhe ſhould aſk. Go and aſk for the head of John the Baptiſt, replied the adultreſs. The girl ran back to Herod, and deſired, that he would forthwith give her on a diſh, the head of John the Baptiſt. Struck at the unnatural requeſt, the king was ſorry for the raſh promiſe he had made, but out of reſpect to the company, reſolved to keep his oath, not to diſpleaſe the daughter of Herodias. He therefore ordered an executioner to go forthwith to the priſon, and cut off the Baptiſt's head. The head was given in a diſh to the girl, and the girl preſented it to her mother.

Thus was the great precurſor of our Lord impiouſly ſlain in the vigour of life; thus was John murdered by the ſword of Herod, who had always admired and eſteemed him for his purity of doctrine and ſanctity of morals. Herod fell not all at once into that enormity of guilt; by gradual ſteps he had been advancing towards the depth of crimes; one exceſs had led him on to another; a luſtful paſſion opened the way to inceſt, and inceſt plunged him into murder. Herod was permitted to take away the life of Saint John the Baptiſt, greater than who no Prophet had ever riſen amongſt the ſons of women.

women. The life of that holy man was ſacrificed to the capricious revenge of a wicked woman; it was ſacrificed for a dance. Hence we ſee, ſays Saint Gregory, in what light we are to conſider this mortal life, which is ſo liable to misfortunes, and ſo miſerably harraſſed by the ſuſpicions, by the hatred and the ſlanders of wicked men. It is to a future life, that we ſhould conſtantly look up; a life, which neither the tongue of ſlander, nor the ſword of perſecution can affect. Tyrants may rage and threaten; pain may crumble theſe mortal bodies into duſt; a paſſing death will open us an entrance into that heavenly kingdom, where the bleſſed know no change, and fear no decay.

§ XXIX. *Miracle of the loaves and fiſhes. Mat.* 14.

A. D. 32. OUR bleſſed Saviour upon the death of John the Baptiſt retired with his Apoſtles into the wilderneſs. In his unerring wiſdom, by which he ſweetly aſſigns all things to their appointed times and places, he deemed it expedient to withdraw from the public at a time, that his miracles began to be the ſubject of inquiry at court. Herod, the ſon of a jealous father, who had ſought to deſtroy Jeſus amongſt the ſlaughtered Innocents, was curious to know, who the man could be, who appeared ſo powerful in word and work: and while ſome ſaid, he muſt be Elias, or one of the Prophets, he vainly fancied him to be the Baptiſt riſen from the dead. Jeſus left them to their groundleſs conjectures, and croſſed the lake of Genezareth to conceal himſelf with his Apoſtles in the deſert. When he came to the oppoſite ſhore, he found a multitude of people, who had gone round by land, and were reſolved to accompany him, for the ſake of hearing his inſtructions, and of ſeeing his miracles. They proceeded in a body together, and advanced ſome way into the deſert. The day began to decline; the Apoſtles came to their divine Maſter, and adviſed him to diſmiſs the people, that they might provide themſelves with ſomething to eat. For they

they were ſtill faſting, and had brought no proviſions with them; the place a deſert and no town was near. Jeſus bade his Apoſtles produce their ſlender ſtore, and aſked, what it was; they anſwered, only five barley loaves and two fiſhes. Divide the multitude into companies, replied our Saviour, and make them ſit down upon the graſs. Then taking the bread into his hands, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he bleſſed the loaves and the fiſhes, and gave them to his diſciples to diſtibute. In the act of diſtribution both the bread and the fiſhes were ſo wonderfully multiplied, that they were more than ſufficient to ſatisfy the whole multitude, which amounted to five thouſand beſides women and children. They all eat, till they were ſatiated, and of the fragments that remained, there was ſtill enough to fill twelve baſkets.

The holy Fathers conſider theſe five thouſand men, as a figure of thoſe Chriſtians, who quit the world, in deſire at leaſt, to follow Jeſus Chriſt thro' the deſert of this life. Their pleaſing conduct preſents us with an admirable picture of thoſe virtues, which diſtinguiſh the perfect members of Chriſt's Church. Attached to the company of their divine Maſter, they attentively liſten to his eternal truths, they ſeek no earthly comfort, but dependently upon his will. The union amongſt themſelves is ſo perfect, that they ſeem to make but one man, being all warmed with the ſame zeal, and animated with the ſame ſpirit in purſuit of the ſame end. They are happy in the preſence of Jeſus their Lord and Saviour, they perſiſt in his ſervice without being tired, and joyfully bear whatever labours and difficulties they meet with, rather than fail in the fidelity, which they owe to their Creator. Reſigned to the divine will, they truſt to the fatherly goodneſs of a God-man in their preſent wants, they know he has numbered the hairs of their heads, not one of which falls to the ground without his permiſſion; they remember it is he, who feeds the birds of the air, and never abandons thoſe, who are ſerious in their endeavours to ſerve him. With ſuch ſentiments of faith and holy confidence they perſevere to the

the end, and deſerve thereby to receive the reward of their patience.

§ XXX. *Saint Peter upon the waters. Mat.* 14.

A. D. 32. THE wonderful multiplication of the loaves and fiſhes impreſſed ſuch a ſenſe of gratitude upon the hearts of the people, that they were for ſetting the crown upon their benefactor's head, and making him king. But our bleſſed Lord, who by example as well as by word of mouth came to teach his followers not to ſeek, much leſs to intrude themſelves into wordly dignities and honours, fled from them, and concealed himſelf in a neighbouring mountain. When it was grown duſk, and the people were diſperſed, the diſciples went back to the ſea ſhore. For he had told them to take the boat, and return without him to Bethſaida. This he did, as the event ſhowed, to convince them of their own weakneſs in the abſence of their divine Maſter, without whom they could do nothing. They had no ſooner put to ſea, but a ſtorm aroſe, and the boat was violently toſſed by the foaming waves. They plied their oars, they exerted all their might, and ſtruggled with the contrary wind the whole night. Our bleſſed Saviour ſaw them from the ſhore, but ſeemed in no great haſte to help them. About the break of day he advanced towards them upon the ſurface of the deep, and came near the boat, as if he meant to paſs them. The ſpectacle was new to the diſciples: not knowing how any one could walk upon the waters, they took it for a ghoſt, and ſcreamed out with fright. Jeſus upon that ſpoke to them and ſaid, Fear not; it is I. Peter was the firſt to know his Maſter's voice, and being as regardleſs of danger, as he was confident of the divine ſuccour, immediately replied, Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you upon the waters. Jeſus ſaid, Come: Peter that inſtant threw himſelf out of the boat, and to the great aſtoniſhment of the reſt walked, as ſteadily upon the rolling billows, as tho' he had trod on ſolid ground.

He

He went boldly on, till he came near to our bleſſed Saviour, when perceiving the wind was high and the ſea rough, he loſt courage and began to ſink. Terrified at his ſituation, he cried out, Save me, Lord; and Jeſus ſtretching forth his hand took hold of him, ſaying, Thou man of little faith, why didſt thou doubt? He entered with him into the boat; the wind fell, and they rowed aſhore.

The holy Fathers, who conſider all the words and actions of our Saviour as full of myſtery, aſk the queſtion, why he would permit his Apoſtle to ſink, after he had expreſsly commanded him to come forth upon the waters. It was, ſay they, to convince him by experience, that his life and being depended on the ſaving hand of God; it was to check that forward boldneſs, which ſeems to have been blended in his natural diſpoſition, leſt it might make him vain and preſumptuous. A certain degree of fearfulneſs is conducive to our ſpiritual good: it helps to make us humble and diffident of ourſelves: it is founded in the knowledge of our own inability, and this knowledge tells us, that for the ſucceſs of our undertakings we muſt ſolely depend on God, who lets us down, and draws us up again, as he pleaſes. Of all thoſe, who have the happineſs to believe in Chriſt, there is not one, who has not, and does not daily receive from his divine hand greater favours, than Saint Peter did in being preſerved from the watery deep. There are other ſtorms more fatal to our ſouls; there are other gulfs, and other waters of perdition, from which we ſtand hourly in need of being ſaved by the grace of our Redeemer; without his ſupporting hand we long time ſince had ſunk beneath the evils, that ſurround us.

§ XXXI. *Jeſus the living bread. John 6.*

THE Jews, who had followed Jeſus into the deſert, having loſt ſight of him, and knowing that his diſciples were gone acroſs the lake, returned to Capharnaum, where they were ſurpriſed to *A. D.* 32.

find him. They aſked him, when and how he came? Jeſus, without taking notice of their enquiries, told them, they only followed him for the ſake of the bread, which they had miraculouſly ſhared in the day before, and from thence took occaſion of mentioning a much more excellent Bread, which he promiſed to give them for their nouriſhment to eternal life. For I am the living Bread, which came down from heaven, ſaid he, and this is the Bread, which I ſhall give; it is my fleſh for the life of the world, and whoſoever eateth thereof, he ſhall live for ever. The incredulous Jews, not being acquainted with a doctrine ſo ſpiritual and ſublime, called it a harſh ſaying, and diſputed with one another, how it were poſſible he could give them his fleſh to eat? But notwithſtanding their cavils, our bleſſed Lord poſitively aſſerted the point in queſtion, and in terms ſtill more explicit, thus confirmed, what he had juſt told them: *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, unleſs you eat the fleſh of the ſon of man, and drink his blood, you ſhall not have life in you. He, that eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, hath life everlaſting: he abideth in me, and I in him. For my fleſh is truly meat, and my blood is truly drink. This is the Bread, which cometh down from heaven, not like the Manna, of which your fathers eat and died. He, that eateth this Bread, ſhall live for ever.* Many therefore of the Jews, who were preſent, and even ſome of the diſciples took offence at theſe expreſſions, and were ſcandalized at the doctrine they conveyed; and becauſe they did not underſtand, how Chriſt could really give them his fleſh to eat, and his blood to drink, refuſed to believe, and left him. According to their carnal notion of things they concluded, that Jeſus meant to give them his fleſh to eat, and his blood to drink, not concealed under the pure appearances of bread and wine, but in a diſguſtful manner, like the fleſh of a dead man, ſays Saint Anſtin, or a piece of meat from the ſhambles. And therefore to diſabuſe them of that groſs miſtake, our bleſſed Saviour told them, that fleſh inanimate and ſeparated from the ſpirit, would profit nothing; but that the fleſh, which he ſhould give them, was quickened by the Spirit, and

ſhould

ſhould quicken them. Having given that explanation of the manner, in which he promiſed to communicate his Body and his Blood, as he did verily and in deed, at his laſt ſupper, he turned to the Twelve, and aſked them, if they would alſo leave him? Upon which Saint Peter, with his wonted zeal made anſwer, To whom, Lord, ſhall we go? Thou haſt the words of eternal life: we believe and know thee to be Chriſt the Son of God.

Our bleſſed Lord perceiving the minds of the people were exaſperated againſt him, on account of his doctrine, withdrew from that part of the country, and retired towards the confines of Tyre and Sidon. Notwithſtanding the deſire he ſeemed to have of being there concealed, he was diſcovered by a Chananean woman, whoſe daughter was poſſeſſed by an evil ſpirit. She came and earneſtly beſought him to have pity on her: he made her no anſwer: ſhe redoubled her prayers, crying aloud for relief: the Apoſtles interceded in her behalf, and Jeſus ſaid, that he was ſent only to thoſe, who were periſhing in the houſe of Iſrael. Not diſcouraged at the refuſal, the woman puſhed forward and caſt herſelf at the feet of Jeſus, ſaying, Lord, help me. Jeſus told her, it was not fit to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs. Yes, Lord, ſaid ſhe, with an humble confidence, even the dogs are permitted to eat of the crums, that fall from their maſter's table; I aſk no more. Then Jeſus, overcome as it were by her pious importunity, made anſwer, O woman, great is thy faith; be it done, as thou deſireſt; and her daughter was cured from that hour.

Our bleſſed Saviour, ſays Saint Chryſoſtom, refuſed at firſt to liſten to the petition of this Chananean woman, that by her example he might inſtruct us, with what faith, humility, and perſeverance, we ought to pray. To make his ſervants the more ſenſible of his mercy, and the more eager to obtain it, he often ſeems to pay no attention to their prayers, till he has exerciſed them in the virtues of humility and patience. Aſk, ſays he, and you ſhall receive; knock, and it ſhall be opened to you.

§ XXXII.

§ XXXII. *Transfiguration of our Lord. Mat.* 17.

A. D. 33. OUR bleſſed Saviour, after ſome ſtay in the confines of Tyre, returned into Galilee, where he wrought many miraculous cures of the infirm and lame, of the blind and dumb. After that, he viſited the borders of Cæſarea, which was a town ſituated near the ſprings of the river Jordan, and ſubject to Philip, the brother of king Herod Being on the way thither, and converſing with his Apoſtles, as they went along, he aſked them, Who do the people ſay I am? Some ſay you are John the Baptiſt, anſwered the Apoſtles, and ſome Elias; others again ſay, that you are Jeremiah, or ſome one of the ancient Prophets. But you, ſaid our bleſſed Saviour, who do you ſay I am? Simon Peter, without a moment's heſitation, made anſwer and ſaid, Thou art Chriſt, the Son of the living God. Bleſſed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, replied our Saviour; becauſe it is not from the dictates of fleſh and blood, but by the revelation of my heavenly Father, that thou haſt learned this truth. And I ſay unto thee, becauſe thou art Peter, which is to ſay a rock, that upon this rock I will build my Church, and the powers of hell ſhall never prevail againſt her. To thee alſo I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatſoever thou ſhalt bind or looſe on earth, ſhall be alſo bound or looſed in heaven. Such is the ſolemn promiſe, which Jeſus Chriſt then made to Saint Peter, of conſtituting him the Head of his Church, which, like a great fabrick, being built on him, as on a firm rock, he aſſures him ſhall never fail. Nor by any fault, which that Apoſtle committed afterwards, was Jeſus ever provoked to retract the promiſe, he had once made. But leſt a promiſe ſo flattering and extenſive might render that Apoſtle too elate, he humbled him ſoon after by a rebuke the moſt ſevere. For Peter, being not yet initiated in the myſtery of the Croſs, endeavoured to diſſuade his divine Maſter from expoſing himſelf to the ignominious treatment, that awaited him at Jeruſalem. Satan, replied our Saviour,

viour, for ſo he called him to make him ſenſible of his error in oppoſing the divine will, go back, thou art a ſcandal to me; thou doeſt not yet reliſh the things of God. For he, who will ſave his life, ſhall loſe it, and he, who ſhall loſe his life for my ſake, ſhall find it. If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, take up his croſs, and ſo follow me.

Six days after this, Jeſus called aſide three of his Apoſtles, who ſeem to have been greater favorites than the reſt, and went with them to a high mountain, which is generally thought to have been the mountain of Thabor in Galilee. He there compoſed himſelf to pray in their preſence, and as he prayed, his body was transfigured into the appearance of a glorified body. His face ſhone with reſplendent brightneſs, like the ſun, and his garments became white as ſnow. Moyſes and Elias appeared at the ſame time, and diſcourſed with him upon the ſubject of his future Paſſion in Jeruſalem. Saint Peter, in a tranſport of joy at what he ſaw, cried out, Lord, it is good for us to remain here; if thou wilt, let us make three tents, one for thee, one for Moyſes, and a third for Elias. And as he was ſpeaking, behold! a bright-ſhining cloud ſpread itſelf over them, and from the cloud iſſued forth a voice, ſaying, This is my beloved Son, hear ye him. The three Apoſtles at the ſound fell proſtrate on their faces, and remained trembling on the ground, till Jeſus came, and with a gentle touch, bade them riſe, and not fear. He then went down with them from the mountain, but ſtrictly charged them not to ſay a word of what they had ſeen, till the ſon of man ſhould be riſen from the dead.

This myſterious transfiguration of our Lord was one of the means he made uſe of to confirm the faith of his Apoſtles, and to convince them in a manner the moſt ſenſible of his divinity: and in effect Saint Peter has mentioned it in one of his Epiſtles, as a convincing evidence of that eternal truth. Jeſus Chriſt, by exhibiting to his favorite Apoſtles the figure of a glorified body, was pleaſed to give them a foreſight of that happy change, which the bodies of his Elect ſhall put on at the general

general reſurrection. By that he inſpired them with freſh zeal in his ſervice, by that he animated them with new courage to undertake and ſuffer great things for his holy name, by that in fine he ſhowed them, how tranſcendent the glory is of that ſupernatural happineſs, which ſhall reward the light and momentary tribulations, that the juſt here undergo for God's ſake.

§ XXXIII. *A Child the model of humility. Mat.* 18.

A. D. 33. AS our bleſſed Saviour came down from the mountain, he ſaw a croud of people gathered round his other diſciples, who were endeavouring without effect to caſt the devil out of a young man, brought to them by his father in Jeſus's abſence. The father perceiving Jeſus, as he approached, ran to meet him, and humbly beſought him to have pity on his unhappy ſon, and to deliver him from the evil ſpirit, that tormented him. Jeſus heard, and granted him his petition. Then came the diſciples ſecretly to Jeſus, and aſked, why they had not been able to relieve the young man, ſince he had given them power over the infernal ſpirits. It was on account of your incredulity, replied our Saviour; for if you had but faith, you might move mountains: this kind of devil was not to be removed but by prayer and faſting. They walked on towards the city of Capharnaum, which for two years had been our Saviour's chief place of reſidence: he ſpoke to them, as they went along, upon his approaching death and reſurrection. His language was a myſtery to the diſciples, nor did they underſtand what he meant: they began ſome other ſubject of diſcourſe, and diſputed apart with one another, which amongſt them ſeemed to be the greater man. When they reached Capharnaum, the tax-gatherers came to Saint Peter, and aſked him, if his maſter did not pay the tribute money? Saint Peter anſwered that he did, and went ſtreight to the houſe of his maſter's abode. As ſoon as he entered, Jeſus prevented him, and aſked, from whom it was, that the princes of

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the earth received tribute? whether from their children, or from ſtrangers? From ſtrangers, replied Peter: the children then are free, ſaid our Saviour; but that we may not ſcandalize them, Go to the ſea, and take the firſt fiſh, that comes to hand: upon opening its mouth, you will find a piece of money, which you ſhall pay to the officer for us two. In this inſtance, our bleſſed Lord inſtructs his followers to comply with the well regulated duties of ſocial life, and to obey thoſe civil powers, that are eſtabliſhed for the good of the community.

The Apoſtles being met at our Saviour's dwelling, he aſked them, what they had been diſputing about, as they came along: they made him no anſwer. He therefore ſat down, called them round him, and in order to cure them of their vain notions of preferment in his ſervice, ſaid, Whoever amongſt you would wiſh to become the firſt, let him demean himſelf as the laſt, and behave, as if he were the ſervant of all. And to give them as diſtinct an idea, as was poſſible, of that humble ſpirit, which he deſired to infuſe into their ſouls, he brought forward a little child, and placing him before them, ſaid, that unleſs they became like unto that little one, they ſhould never enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Humility is a virtue eſſentially requiſite for ſalvation; repugnant as it is to human pride, it muſt be ſtudiouſly cheriſhed, if we pretend to a place in the kingdom of Chriſt. It is of the utmoſt conſequence to check that ſtrong inclination, by which we are led to think highly of ourſelves, to grow impatient of reſtraint, and to run after every object, which either flatters our vanity or feeds our ambition. The only ambition worthy of a Chriſtian is to rival the perfection of the Saints by a holy life, to aim at a crown of immortal glory amongſt the Angels, and to aſpire to the happineſs of being exalted by our heavenly Father in his kingdom. We are born and have been baptized for greater things, than to become ſlaves to the baſe paſſions of corrupt nature. However ſhining may be the talents, wealth and titles, which make one man appear greater than another in the eyes of

of his fellow creatures, it is humility, it is charity, and the other Goſpel virtues, which conſtitute the real goodneſs of a Chriſtian, and render him truly great in the ſight of God. The compariſon of a little child, as it is applied by our bleſſed Saviour, ſtrikes at the root and checks the very ſap of pride. To enable us to form ſome judgment of ourſelves, and to ſee what place we deſerve amongſt the followers of Jeſus Chriſt, let us look into our hearts, and there ſearch for the diſpoſitions of the tractable little child. Humility of ſentiments, innocence of manners, a docile ſubmiſſion and obedience to God in his ſubſtitutes and precepts muſt form the character of every Chriſtian, who means to enter thro' the narrow gate into everlaſting life.

§ XXXIV. *The ten lepers.* *Luke* 17.

A. D. 33. THE feaſt of Tabernacles being near, the Apoſtles preſſed their divine Maſter to go into Judea, and made uſe of arguments to perſuade him to it. They conſidered it as a fair opportunity of ſhowing himſelf at Jeruſalem, and of diſplaying his miracles to the world; they ſaid, ſome of his followers were wavering in their faith and required the evidence of miracles to fix them in his ſervice. Jeſus had quitted Judea, as we have ſeen, upon the death of John the Baptiſt, and he knew the Jews ſought to put him alſo to death; he therefore told his Apoſtles, that his time was not yet come, nor would he accompany them amongſt his enemies. Wherefore as they wiſhed to be at Jeruſalem for the beginning of the feſtival, they ſet off without him: he remained ſome days in Galilee, and then followed them, but in a private manner, and unattended by any of his diſciples. He paſſed thro' the middle of Samaria, and coming to a certain town of the country was diſcovered by ten lepers, who ſtanding at a diſtance, and raiſing their voice in a ſuppliant manner begged, he would have mercy on them. Jeſus pitying their condition, bade them go and ſhow themſelves to the prieſts.

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The lepers went in obedience to his command, and in the way were ſuddenly made clean. Struck at the miracle, one of them immediately began with a loud voice to proclaim the praiſes of almighty God, ran back to his divine benefactor, and throwing himſelf at his feet, returned thanks for the bleſſing he had received. Jeſus aſked him, if they were not ten, who had been cured, and what was become of the other nine? For of them all, ſays Saint Luke, this was the only one, who returned to give glory to God, and he was a Samaritan. Jeſus bade him riſe, commended his faith, and diſmiſſed him.

The reproach, which our bleſſed Saviour caſt upon the nine lepers for not coming to thank him for the mercy he had ſhown them, proves how much he is diſpleaſed with the vice of ingratitude. Ingratitude, ſays Saint Bernard, dries up the fountain of piety, ſtops the flow of divine grace, and hinders the hand of God from ſhowering down the favours, he has in ſtore for his deſerving friends. No favour from God, ſay the holy Fathers, ought to be received without the deepeſt ſenſe of gratitude: gratitude in return for one favour is the ſureſt way to receive a ſecond. Gratitude is a part of our Chriſtian duty; it is a pleaſing virtue, and the characteriſtic of a good heart. It is not enough to obſerve a ſilent reſpect for our benefactors, or to content ourſelves with the inward ſatisfaction, we feel upon ſome extraordinary favour they have done us. The nine ungrateful lepers were undoubtedly ſenſible of the notice, which Jeſus Chriſt had taken of them, admired his goodneſs and rejoiced at their cure. But they returned no public thanks, they ſhowed no exterior ſigns of a grateful heart, their memory is therefore branded with infamy to future ages, that Chriſtians may from thence conceive a juſt horror of ingratitude, which renders them odious to God and man. Happy is the man, ſays Saint Bernard, who is never weary in returning thanks to God for the daily benefits he receives; who, conſidering himſelf as a ſtranger in this world, acknowledges every act of kindneſs as a favour the more gratuitouſly beſtowed, ſince

ſince of himſelf without the grace of his merciful Redeemer he can merit nothing but contempt and puniſhment.

§ XXXV. *The woman taken in adultery. John 8.*

A. D. 33. JESUS made no ſtay in Samaria, but went ſtreight on to Jeruſalem. Upon his arrival there he found the Jews ſtrangely divided in their opinions about him: ſome maintained him to be a good man, others not: they had looked for him on the firſt day of the feaſt, and not finding him, many called him a ſeducer of the people. When the time of the feſtival was half over, for it laſted eight days, Jeſus appeared publicly in the Temple, and ſitting down to inſtruct the people drew the eyes and attention of all upon him. They admired the heavenly doctrine, that flowed from his lips, and ſtood aſtoniſhed at the manner, in which he delivered himſelf. For they knew, he had never been initiated in the ſtudy of the Law, nor been ever caught in the ſchools of human learning. He gave full ſcope to his zeal, and ſpoke his ſentiments ſo freely, that the people wondered to ſee the Phariſees remain ſilent, and ſome even began to doubt, whether the Scribes and Elders had not at laſt acknowledged him for the true Meſſias: many of the people believed in him, and paid him great reſpect on account of the miracles he wrought. The Phariſees ſwelled with envy; nor would their pride ſuffer them to ſtand inactive any longer; they ſent their officers to apprehend and bring Jeſus before them. But Jeſus's hour was not yet come; the officers were ſo charmed with his diſcourſe, that they made no attempt to ſeize him, and returned as they came: being reprimanded by their maſters for not having executed their orders, they made no other anſwer, than that no man ever ſpoke like him. Jeſus retired at his own hour to the mountain of Olives to pray, and came betimes next morning into the Temple, where he reſumed his inſtructions to the people. The Phariſees with pain beheld the ſucceſs, that attended his preaching, while

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ſome ſtiled him the Prophet, and ſome the Chriſt: being bent upon his ruin they watched every opportunity, that ſeemed favourable to their invidious deſign, and left no ſtone unturned to ſlander his reputation, and deſtroy his credit amongſt the people. They had ſurpriſed a woman in the fact of adultery; they led her away to the Temple, preſented her to Jeſus, and aſked him, what he would have done to her? Their intention was to traduce him before the public, to accuſe him of cruelty, if he condemned her, and of violating the Law, if he acquitted her. For the Law of Moyſes ordained, that every woman, convicted of adultery, ſhould be ſtoned to death. Our bleſſed Lord, who ſaw thro' the malice of their hearts, bowed himſelf down, as they continued aſking him, and with his finger wrote upon the ground. They repeated the queſtion, and inſiſted upon an anſwer. Jeſus raiſed himſelf up and ſaid, Let him, who is without ſin amongſt you, caſt the firſt ſtone at her; then ſtooping down again wrote as before on the ground. The Phariſees upon that ſneaked away one by one, and left the woman ſtanding in the midſt. Jeſus raiſed himſelf up, and aſked her, if any one had condemned her, and ſhe anſwered, no one; neither will I, replied he, depart in peace, and beware thou ſin no more.

By this example our bleſſed Saviour teaches us to look into ourſelves, and to examine our own conduct rather than cenſure that of our neighbour. Men oftentimes have a horror of groſs ſins, that ſtrike their ſenſes, and take no notice of internal ſins, which are perhaps more monſtrous in the eyes of a pure Spirit. The ſin of the rebel Angel in heaven, and the ſin of our firſt parents in paradiſe were undoubtedly more heinous, than that of the adultreſs. It is unpardonable in a Chriſtian harſhly to cenſure and condemn his brother, becauſe he has fallen into a fault, of which he himſelf is perhaps innocent. It would better become him to humble his ſoul before God, by whoſe mercy he has been hitherto preſerved from falling into ſins ſtill more enormous; which, conſidering the inſtability of his heart, he knows not how ſoon

ſoon it may be his misfortune to commit. If we expect to be treated with lenity in our misfortunes, we ſhould not forget to ſhow that lenity to others. Lenity is one of the moſt effectual methods to make the delinquent ſenſible of his fault. The lenity, that Jeſus Chriſt ſhowed on the occaſion, had without doubt a more ſalutary effect upon the adultreſs's mind, than all the ſeverity of the Moſaic law. It is the ſpirit of lenity and charity, which the Church in imitation of her Spouſe has adopted with regard to her children: ſhe turns her back upon none, however grievous their ſins may be; ſhe beholds them with the eye of a tender mother, ſhe invites them to their Chriſtian duties, ſhe ſtands with open arms to receive the penitent, and abſolves them from their guilt, the moment ſhe is aſſured of the ſincerity of their repentance.

§ XXXVI. *The man who had been born blind.* John 9.

A. D. 33. OUR bleſſed Saviour, having ſilenced the Scribes and Phariſees by an anſwer, they did not expect, continued his inſtructions to the people, and expreſsly told them, that he was the light of the world, and that no one, who followed him, ſhould walk in darkneſs. He expoſtulated with his enemies, why they ſhowed ſuch ſpite, and uſed ſuch violence againſt him. Is there one amongſt you, ſaid he, who can convict me of having done evil? If you are the deſcendants of Abraham, why do you not perform the works of Abraham? If I have ſpoken nothing but the truth to you, why do you not believe me? why do you ſeek my life? Abraham did not ſo. Abraham your father was exceeding glad to ſee my day of coming into the world; for before Abraham had a being, I am. I come from above; I am not of this world; I honour my Father, who is with me; I always do his will, and ſpeak the truths, he hath imparted to me. But you underſtand not my words, nor do you hear, becauſe you are not of God; for who is of God, heareth the words of God.

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The Jews in anſwer reviled him with abuſive language, and took up ſtones to throw at him. But Jeſus withdrew from their preſence, and retired out of the Temple.

Jeſus, as he paſſed along, ſaw a beggar, who had been blind from his birth. The diſciples aſked him, to what cauſe, whether to the man's own, or to his parent's ſin, his blindneſs was to be attributed? Neither to the one nor the other, replied our Saviour, but that the glory of God may be manifeſted in his cure: I am the light of the world. Having ſaid that, he ſpat upon the ground, and with his ſpittle moiſtened the duſt into clay, which he ſpread upon the eyes of the blind man, bidding him go and waſh in the pool of Siloe. The man went and waſhed, and came back ſeeing: and it was the Sabbath-day. The miracle was quickly divulged thro' the city, and became the ſubject of public talk. Every one, who had known the man, and had ſeen him ſit begging in the ſtreet, was curious to aſk him, in what manner he had recovered his ſight. His anſwer was, that a certain man, called Jeſus, had made clay with his ſpittle, had anointed his eyes, and ſent him to waſh in the pool of Siloe; that he went and waſhed, and ſaw. The man was carried before the Phariſees, to whom he gave the ſame account. The Phariſees were unwilling to believe the fact, which was ſo much to Jeſus's honour: they reaſoned differently upon it: ſome ſaid, that no good man would ever have made clay upon the Sabbath, while others more juſtly obſerved, that none but a good man could give ſight to the blind. They aſked the man, what he thought of the perſon, who had cured him. He is undoubtedly a Prophet, replied the man. Provoked at his anſwer, they pretended to call the miracle in queſtion, and to doubt, whether he had been ever blind. They ſent for his parents, of whom they deſired to know, whether this was their ſon, who is ſaid to have been born blind, and how he came to ſee. The parents being afraid of being brought to trouble on that account, anſwered with great caution: they only ſaid, that he was their ſon, and had been born blind; but that how

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and by what means he had recovered his ſight, they were wholly ignorant; that if they wanted to be ſatisfied in that point, they had but to aſk their ſon, who was of an age to anſwer and to ſpeak for himſelf. They therefore called the man again, and dictated the anſwer they would have him make: ſpeak out, they cried, and give glory to God, for we know this man is a ſinner. Whether he be a ſinner or not, replied the beggar, I know not; but this I know, that I was blind, and I now ſee. Why, what did he do to thee, ſaid they, and how did he open thy eyes? I have already told you, ſaid the man, and you have heard it. Why would you hear it again? Will you alſo become his diſciples? They therefore reviled him, ſaying, Be thou his diſciple, we are the diſciples of Moyſes. To Moyſes we know God has ſpoken; but as for this man, we know not from whence he is. That is truly wonderful, anſwered the beggar; you know he hath opened mine eyes, which he could not have done, unleſs he were from God; for God granteth not ſuch favours to ſinners. For from the beginning of the world it hath not been heard, that any man ever opened the eyes of one born blind: and unleſs this man were of God, he could not do any thing. The Phariſees upon that obſerved no farther meaſures with him; they curſed him for pretending to teach them, and caſt him out of the Synagogue. Jeſus hearing of the diſgrace, which was caſt upon the poor man for his conſtancy in profeſſing the truth, put himſelf in the way of being met by him, and aſked him, if he believed in the Son of God? The man deſired to know who he was; and being informed that it was He, who was ſpeaking to him, he readily profeſſed his belief, proſtrated himſelf at the feet of Jeſus, and adored him.

Thrice happy, ſay the holy Fathers, was the man, who thro' his corporal blindneſs diſcovered the true light, which enlightens every man, who cometh into this world. He became not the adorer only, but alſo the defender of Jeſus Chriſt againſt his enemies; unſhaken by their threats, he boldly declared the truth, and ſilenced their captious arguments againſt it. The Jews caſt him out

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of their ſynagogue, but Jeſus received him into his communion, and made his heart the living temple of the Holy Ghoſt.

§ XXXVII. *The good Samaritan. Luke* 10.

AFTER the cure of the blind man, Saint John, c. x. relates what our bleſſed Saviour told the Jews relatively to his Church, which he repreſents as a congregation of believers, called together by himſelf into one fold. Into this fold no one enters but by him, who is the door, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf: he is the ſovereign paſtor of our ſouls; he has ſpared no labour in ſeeking that, which was loſt; he has ſacrificed his eaſe, and laid down his life for the ſalvation of his flock. He therefore calls himſelf the good ſhepherd, who with the tenderneſs of a father watches over and defends his fold, while the mercenary hireling flies at the approach of danger, and abandons his flock to be diſperſed and worried by the wolf. He continues the allegory, and ſpeaking of other ſheep, who were to enter in and compoſe his fold, which he makes but one under one ſhepherd, he ſpecifies the character of docility and obedience, which diſtinguiſhes his flock from every other flock, and ſays, that they who are his, know his voice, and follow it; that he knows them, and they know him; that he calls them by name, and they obey; that he goes before them, and they follow. Having thus inculcated that mutual duty, which ſubſiſts between the ſpiritual ſhepherd and his flock, our bleſſed Saviour next explains the nature of that univerſal charity, which links all men together, and makes them neighbours to one another. *A. D.* 33.

A doctor of the Law came up, and with an aſſuming air aſked him, What was the great commandment of the Law? Jeſus anſwered with his uſual brevity, that it was to love God above all things, and his neighbour as himſelf. And who is my neighbour, replied the doctor? Jeſus anſwered him in the following parable: A certain traveller

traveller being on the way from Jeruſalem to Jericho, fell into the hands of thieves, who after having robbed him, grievouſly wounded and left him half-dead upon the ground. A prieſt was accidentally travelling the ſame way, found the man lying in that condition, but made no ſtop nor offer to aſſiſt him. A Levite paſſed by ſoon after, and ſhowed as little feeling as the prieſt. At laſt came a Samaritan, who being moved with compaſſion for the poor man in that forlorn ſituation, went to his relief, dreſſed and tied up his wounds, conveyed him to a public houſe, recommended him to the hoſt, and gave him money to procure every thing neceſſary for his recovery. Now, which of theſe three ſeemeth to thee, ſaid our bleſſed Saviour, to have been a neighbour to the wounded traveller? It was he, no doubt, replied the doctor, who gave him his aſſiſtance. Go therefore, ſubjoined our Saviour, and do thou in the like manner.

From this inſtance it appears, that a follower of Jeſus Chriſt is not to reſtrain his charity, or to exclude any man in diſtreſs from the acts of his benevolence. No matter, what his country may be, or what his profeſſion in life: he is created according to the image of God, he is redeemed by the blood of Chriſt, and his preſent neceſſity claims a right to our aſſiſtance, if we are able to give it. Charity is compaſſionate and benign; it is not confined to a particular kingdom or climate, nor appropriated to any one ſet of men excluſive of another; it embraces all mankind. The charitable Samaritan no ſooner found his neighbour in diſtreſs, than he went to his relief; not content with a barren pity, ſuch as the Prieſt and Levite might have felt, he ſtopt to comfort and aſſiſt him: he ſet aſide every other buſineſs for the preſent moment, and exerted his charity at the hour it was wanted; the next hour might have been too late. The opportunity of doing good, is never to be neglected: a work of mercy well timed is doubly acceptable both to God and man.

§ XXXVIII. *Martha and Mary.* *Luke* 10.

BESIDES the twelve Apoſtles, whom our bleſſed Saviour had choſen from the number of his followers, he choſe alſo ſeventy two others, who are known by the ſpecial name of diſciples. Theſe he likewiſe employed, tho' in an inferior degree, as his co-adjutors in doing good to men. He ſent them before him two and two together to the different places, which he intended to viſit. They faithfully acquitted themſelves of their reſpective functions without being jealous of the twelve, who had been raiſed to a ſtation above them. They are the prototypes of thoſe inferior miniſters in the Church, who with due ſubordination to their Epiſcopal ſuperiors have their ſhare in the work of the holy miniſtry, according to the rank and power, which is given them. The ſeventy two Diſciples were ſent by their divine Maſter with a power to preach, to caſt out devils, and to cure diſeaſes. On a certain occaſion they returned with great joy to tell him, that in virtue of his holy name the impure ſpirits were ſubject to them. Our bleſſed Saviour ſaw the ſpark of vanity, which was riſing in their hearts, and checked it immediately by telling them, that he had ſeen Satan fall like a flaſh of lightning from heaven: I have given you the power, ſaid he, to work miracles, but do not rejoice on that account; rejoice that your names are written in the book of life. You are happy in being privileged to ſee and hear the things, you do; many of the Prophets and ancient kings wiſhed for the ſame privilege, but had it not. Jeſus then by a ſpecial impulſe of the Holy Ghoſt returned thanks aloud to his Father for having revealed to the humble theſe ſublime myſteries, which were hidden from the proud and wiſe. After he had finiſhed theſe diſcourſes, he retired into a certain town, where he was received by Martha, the ſiſter of Mary. Theſe two ſiſters lived together in Bethania, and often, as it ſeems, had the happineſs of being viſited by our bleſſed Saviour. *A. D.* 33.

Mary

Mary placed herſelf at his ſacred feet, and there ſilently liſtened to the truths, he ſpoke, while Martha was buſily employed in preparing ſomething for him to eat. Martha was diſpleaſed at Mary for leaving her to do the work alone, and made her complaint of it to Jeſus. Jeſus was far from interrupting Mary in her laudable attention to the word of God; but ſpoke in her defence to Martha, and ſaid, that ſhe gave herſelf much unneceſſary trouble, while Mary had choſen the better part, which ſhould not be taken from her.

From hence the holy Fathers conclude, that tho' ſome muſt neceſſarily apply themſelves to the external works of charity, and juſtice, without which no ſociety can be maintained, they nevertheleſs are the moſt happy, who paſs their days in holy retirement, free from the cares of worldly buſineſs, and employed in the exerciſes of a ſpiritual life. Nothing in appearance could be more becoming the ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt, than to prepare him a repaſt; yet Chriſt preferred the repoſe of Mary to the employment of Martha. One thing is neceſſary, ſaid Jeſus to Martha, and that the Saints have conſidered as ſpoken to themſelves. To ſave their ſouls they thought was the only neceſſary thing, they had to do, and that they ſtrove to do with all their might. Whatever elſe ſeemed to draw their attention from that neceſſary buſineſs, they either carefully avoided, or made ſubordinate to it. They were careful to ſanctify the works of an active life with a pure intention, they joined the two ſiſters together; the activity of Martha, and the prayer of Mary, was their alternate exerciſe; thus they always kept the eſſential point in view, and thus they happily ſucceeded in that one, that important, and that neceſſary affair, for which they only lived.

§ XXXIX. *Folly of riches. Luke* 12.

A. D. 33. OUR bleſſed Saviour, having expreſſed his approbation of a contemplative life in the perſon of Mary Magdalene, declared the advantage

vantage and neceſſity of prayer for all, who are engaged in the exerciſes of an active life. He inſtructed his diſciples in the method of praying, and in a ſet form of words made for their daily uſe a moſt holy prayer, which is called the Lord's prayer; he moreover told them, how neceſſary it was to pray, not to fall into temptation; that they ought to pray with a lively faith, and a firm hope, that they ought to knock and perſevere, till they receive their petition, for that his Father will refuſe them nothing, which they ſhall aſk in his name. A petition in the name of Chriſt our Saviour, ſays St. Auſtin, is that, which has eternal ſalvation for its object. A petition for the ſuperfluous goods of life, for power, wealth, or honours therefore is not the petition, which Chriſt has promiſed ſhall be granted. Such things oftener hinder our ſalvation, than promote it. They naturally nouriſh our pride, and furniſh ſelf-love with every material for its own indulgence. Therefore it is not for ſuch things, that our bleſſed Saviour would have his diſciples pray; they are beneath the wiſh of a Chriſtian, who has his thoughts fixed upon the endleſs joys of heaven. Be not anxious, as the Gentiles are, ſays he, about your rayment or your food. Behold the birds of the air, and the lilies of the field. The ſame providence of the Father, watches over you; he knows your wants, and will ſupply them: make it your firſt care to ſerve and honour him. Beware of all covetouſneſs, for it is not in the enjoyment of worldly poſſeſſions, that the happineſs of life conſiſts. In confirmation of this truth, he propoſed the parable of a rich man, who ſeeing the plentiful crops, that his lands produced, was at a loſs to know, what he ſhould do with them. How muſt I manage, ſaid he to himſelf, and where am I to ſtore up my heaps of corn? Why, this will I do, I will pull down my preſent barns, and build up larger. There I will lay up my ſtores, and ſay to my ſoul, Behold, my ſoul, thou haſt great plenty of every thing, thou haſt goods to laſt thee for many years; enjoy thyſelf at eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry. Such were the

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vain conceits of that man, when God unexpectedly said to him: Fool, thy soul shall be taken from thee this very night; and who then shall possess thy treasures?

In this parable our blessed Saviour shows his followers, what a folly it is to place their happiness in the enjoyment of worldly wealth. Riches, that may be lost at any hour, and must be parted with in death, cannot make a Christian happy: they may flatter his senses for a while, they cannot satiate the cravings of an immortal soul. The rich man is stiled a fool by our blessed Saviour, not because he had acquired his riches by any undue methods; but because he flattered himself with the thought of enjoying them for many years, little thinking that death was to snatch him from them that very night. If Christians did but oftener reflect upon the moment, which sooner or later must separate them from all their worldly connexions, they would learn to turn their thoughts towards heaven, and to fix their desires on those eternal riches, which nothing can take away. But unfortunately for them, the mortality of their present state, and the uncertain hour of their departure hence is seldom the subject of their reflections. No one scarce considers it, as he ought: and yet it is a consideration the most obvious, and most profitable. Jesus Christ knew the importance of it, and as his desire is, that all men should be saved, he commands all to be constantly upon the watch, lest they chance to be surprised by death, as by a thief in the night. One of the most salutary practices of true piety is to entertain the mind with a frequent meditation of death; it was the practice of holy David; I meditated, says he, in my heart, and the years of eternity I had present to my mind.

§ XL. *The prodigal son.* *Luke* 15.

A. D. 33. THE Son of God, who had often exhorted men to repentance, was pleased to show by different parables, how acceptable the repentance of a sinner is to God, and what joy it gives to the blessed

bleſſed citizens of heaven. At one time he expreſſes it by the joy of a ſhepherd, who has recovered his loſt ſheep, and at another by the joy of a woman calling her neighbours to come and congratulate with her for having found the piece of money ſhe had loſt. But the moſt expreſſive and moſt moving compariſon, our bleſſed Lord makes upon the ſubject, is that of the prodigal ſon. A certain man, ſays he, had two ſons: the youngeſt of them was eager to become his own maſter, and aſked his father to give him the fortune, that fell to his ſhare. Being indulged in his requeſt, he left his father's houſe a few days after, and travelled into a foreign country. He there fell into bad company, and by his prodigality and debauchery ſoon ſpent his fortune. From a ſtate of affluence and eaſe he ſunk into the oppoſite extreme of poverty and want; and what added to his miſery, the country was ſorely pinched with famine. To ſave himſelf from ſtarving he was compelled to look out for ſervice, and actually hired himſelf to a man, who ſent him to take care of his ſwine at a farm-houſe. His condition there was truly lamentable; for no body gave him any thing to eat, and he was reduced to the neceſſity of feeding upon the huſks, which were thrown to the ſwine. The wretchedneſs of his ſituation made him begin to think: he entered into himſelf, and in the anguiſh of his heart exclaimed; Alas! how many ſervants are there, who abound with plenty in my father's houſe, while I am here periſhing with hunger! I will riſe and return to my father. I will confeſs to him the grievouſneſs of my offence, I will own myſelf no longer worthy of being called his ſon, and will offer myſelf to be admitted as one of his menial ſervants. With thoſe ſentiments of humility and ſorrow, he roſe up and returned towards his father's houſe. His father ſaw him coming, when he was yet a great way off, and being moved to tears of joy and compaſſion at the ſight, ran to meet and embrace him. Covered with confuſion, and penetrated with keen remorſe for having departed from ſo good a father, the ſon cried out; Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven and before you; I no longer deſerve to be called

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your ſon. Such unfeigned marks of a contrite and humble heart moved the indulgent father not only to forgive, but alſo to reſtore him to his former favour. The ſervants were ordered to bring forth the richeſt robe for his attire, to put a ring upon his finger and ſhoes upon his feet. The fatted calf was killed, and great rejoicings made upon the occaſion. The elder ſon, who had been out in the field, heard the muſic and dancing, as he came near the houſe, and aſking one of the ſervants what it meant, was diſpleaſed and refuſed to go in. His father went out to invite him; the young man's jealouſy was raiſed, and thus he expreſſed it to his father: I have been always dutiful to you, ſaid he, I have never diſobeyed your commands, and yet you have never given me ſo much as a kid to make merry with my friends; whereas this your profligate ſon, who has ſquandered his ſubſtance away with harlots, no ſooner appears, than the fatted calf is killed for his entertainment. Son, replied the father, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine. But it was fitting we ſhould thus rejoice for thy brother, ſince he was dead, and is come to life again, he was loſt, and is found.

This parable is ſo fully expreſſive of what it is meant to expreſs, ſay the holy Fathers, that nothing more can be added to it. The wretchedneſs, that follows an abandoned ſinner, and the ſatisfaction, that accompanies a true penitent, are fully diſplayed. The unfortunate young man no ſooner became ſenſible of the miſerable ſtate he was in, than he reſolved to quit it. He had fooliſhly departed from his father's houſe; he was admoniſhed of his folly by the misfortunes, he fell into: conſcious of his guilt, he repented and returned to his father with a firm purpoſe never to ſtray from him any more. Let us riſe from the ſtate of ſin in the ſame manner, let us return to God with all our hearts, and we ſhall experience the ſame mercy from our heavenly Father, who tenderly loves us. Let us only repent like the prodigal ſon for having left our Father's houſe, and we ſhall like him rejoice to ſee ourſelves reſtored to our former ſtate of grace and friendſhip with Almighty God. To the paſſing con-

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fusion, which may attend an humble confession of our guilt, succeeds a peace and pleasing joy, which no sinful enjoyment of the world can give.

§ XLI. *The rich glutton. Luke* 16.

A. D. 33. OUR blessed Saviour on a former occasion having declared, how hard it was for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, shows in the parable of a rich glutton, what misery a man entails upon himself by an abuse of riches. There was a rich man, says he, clothed with purple and silk, who feasted sumptuously every day. Before his door lay a poor man, whose name was Lazarus, full of sores, begging for the scraps, which fell from his table, but which no one had the charity to give him. The dogs came and licked the beggar's sores; which he patiently permitted them to do, humbly submitting to receive whatever comfort, it pleased God to send him in his sufferings. Lazarus bore his pains with patience; he made no complaint, nor did he murmur at the treatment he received from man. Death soon put an end to his afflictions; his soul being purified by the sufferings, he had patiently borne, was carried by Angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man died also; but as his state during life had been different from that of Lazarus, so different likewise was his situation after death. He was buried in the deep abyss of hell, from whence lifting up his eyes, he saw Abraham a far off, and Lazarus in his bosom. From the midst of tormenting flames he called upon Abraham, begging of him to compassionate his sufferings, and to let Lazarus come to his relief. Being exquisitely tormented by the piercing fire, he asked for a drop of water to cool his tongue. Abraham bade him remember, that he had wickedly indulged himself in the enjoyment of good things during life, while Lazarus had been beset with sufferings and evils; Lazarus was therefore now comforted, and he tormented. Thus not being able to obtain so much as the smallest comfort for himself,

ſelf, he deſired Abraham to let Lazarus go at leaſt to his father's houſe, and admoniſh his five brothers, who were ſtill living, leſt they might alſo come into the ſame place of torments. They have Moyſes and the Prophets for their inſtruction, ſaid Abraham; if they will not hearken to them, neither will they believe, tho' any one ſhould go to them from the dead.

In this parable our bleſſed Saviour points out the two oppoſite terms, to which a different uſe of God's creatures leads the different claſſes of mankind. By a miſtaken world afflictions are ſtiled the evils of life, tho' to the humble Chriſtian they pave the way towards endleſs happineſs, while riches are eſteemed a bleſſing, tho' ſo dangerouſly connected with real miſery. The ſufferings of Lazarus were ſhort; the joy, that ſucceeded, was eternal. The momentary pleaſures of the rich man were but the prelude to everlaſting torments. After death he found as little pity from Abraham, as Lazarus in life had found from him. The time of mercy was then no more. Happy are the ſuffering poor, if they are only careful to uſe the advantages, which their humble ſtation gives them for their improvement in virtue. A poverty with all its attendants borne in longanimity and patience is a ſource of endleſs bleſſings for the world to come. Unhappy are the affluent rich, if they make not a Chriſtian uſe of what they have received. To comfort the diſtreſt, and to help the needy is the privilege of being rich; and happy they, who ſo uſe their privilege: the way to draw upon themſelves the compaſſion of their heavenly Father, is to ſhow compaſſion to their poor brethren.

§ XLII. *The Phariſee and Publican. Luke* 18.

A. D. 33. UPON the chair of Moyſes, ſaid our bleſſed Saviour to the people, ſit the Scribes and Phariſees; therefore whatever they ſhall tell you to do, obſerve and do it; but according to their works do ye not; for their works correſpond not with their words. Full of themſelves they ſeek the firſt places

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at all public entertainments, they love to be ſaluted in the ſtreets, and affect to be called Rabbi; if they perform the external works of the Law, it is, that they may be ſeen and praiſed by men; they are full of malice and deceit within; if they give alms to the poor, it is with a trumpet ſounding before them; if they faſt, they take care to let others know it; if they pray, it is at the corners of the ſtreets and in public places, that all may ſee them. It is againſt ſuch Phariſaical hypocriſy, that our bleſſed Lord cautions his followers. He tells them to be content with being obſcurely good, to ſeek the approbation of their heavenly Father, who ſees the hidden intention of their hearts; to let the light of their good works be no farther ſeen in public, than that men may be drawn thereby to imitate the good they ſee, and to give the glory thereof to God; he therefore recommends to them to be chearful when they faſt, not to boaſt of their alms-deeds, or make an affected ſhow of devotion.

To humble the pride of thoſe, who entertained high-conceited notions of themſelves, while they deſpiſed others, our bleſſed Lord propoſed the parable of a Phariſee and Publican. Two men, ſaid he, went into the Temple to pray, the one a Phariſee, the other a Publican. The Phariſee ſtanding bolt upright gave thanks aloud to God, becauſe, unlike to the reſt of men, he was neither an extortioner, nor a thief, nor an adulterer, nor ſuch as even the Publican behind him; but that he faſted twice in the week, and paid the tythes of all he poſſeſſed. With very different ſentiments from theſe, the Publican ſtood far below: conſcious of his unworthineſs, he durſt not ſo much as lift up his eyes to heaven; he knocked his breaſt, and only ſpoke theſe words: O God, be merciful to me a ſinner.

Having thus propoſed the parable, Jeſus Chriſt declares how different his thoughts are from ours, and how elevated his judgments are above thoſe of men. The pompous ſhow of piety in the Phariſee may have attracted the eyes of men: it provoked the diſpleaſure of Almighty God: the Publican to vulgar eyes may have

have ſeemed an object of contempt; his humility rendered him acceptable to Jeſus Chriſt: for Jeſus embraces the humble, and rejects the proud. Humility is the foundation of Chriſtian piety; without humility every other virtue is no more than ſhow, a glittering appearance of ſomething good without the reality. A prayer dictated by pride became a ſin in the Phariſee; prayer united with an humble contrition of heart juſtified the Publican.

§ XLIII. *Workmen of the vineyard. Mat. 20.*

THE Hebrew people from the time of their great patriarch Abraham were the only happy nation, which Almighty God had adopted for his own, which, as a choſen vineyard, he had fenced in with wholeſome laws, and cultivated with peculiar care. What could I do more for my vineyard, which I have not done, ſays he by the mouth of his Prophet? I expected it ſhould produce me grapes, and it has yielded nothing but wild and ſour fruit. The maſter ſent his ſervants at different times to the dreſſers of his vineyard, as it is in the parable, to admoniſh them of their duty; they abuſed and beat his ſervants; he ſent to them his only ſon, and him they caſt out, and barbarouſly put to death. What had the maſter then to do with thoſe wicked murderers, ſays our Saviour, but to deſtroy them in their turn, and to ſet out his vineyard to other huſbandmen more induſtrious and faithful? O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, who haſt killed the Prophets, and haſt ſtoned to death thoſe, who were ſent to thee, thou muſt anſwer for the blood, thou haſt unjuſtly ſpilt: the day will come, when thy enemies ſhall ſurround and caſt thee down, nor of thy ſtately buildings ſhall they leave ſo much as one ſtone upon another. From this incredulous and perverſe generation the kingdom of heaven ſhall be taken away and given to a nation, which ſhall yield the fruits thereof in due ſeaſon. To confirm this promiſe made in favour of his Church, which after the reprobation of the Jews

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Jews was to be planted amongſt the Gentiles, our bleſſed Redeemer ſpoke the following parable.

The kingdom of heaven, ſaid he, is like to the maſter of a family, who went out betimes in the morning to hire workmen for his vineyard. He agreed with them, what wages they ſhould have, and ſet them to work. About the third hour of the day he went out again, and finding others ſtanding in the market-place idle, he told them alſo to go into his vineyard, promiſing to each a recompenſe proportionable to his work. He did the ſame at the ſixth and ninth hour of the day. Going out moreover about evening, and meeting with others ſtill unemployed, he aſked them, why they ſtood there all the day idle? Their anſwer was, becauſe no one had hired them; he therefore bade them go like the reſt into his vineyard with a promiſe of rewarding them according to their deſerts. When the day was over, he commanded his Steward to call the workmen together, and pay them their hire. The laſt comers were called upon in the firſt place, and tho' they had worked but one hour, received each of them the ſame wages, as the maſter had promiſed to the firſt. They, who had been ſet to work in the morning, imagining, that when it came to their turn, they ſhould receive ſomething more, were much diſappointed to find no increaſe made to the pay they had agreed for, and received it with great murmuring againſt the maſter. Theſe laſt, ſaid they, have worked no more than an hour, and in their pay are made equal to us, who have borne the burden and heat of the day. Friend, ſaid the maſter to one of them, I do thee no wrong. Didſt thou not agree with me for a day's wages? Take what belongs to thee, and go thy way. It is my will to give to the laſt the ſame, I give to thee. Am I not maſter in this to do as I pleaſe? Or is thine eye to be jealous, becauſe I am good? So ſhall the laſt be firſt, and the firſt, laſt. For of the many, that are called, only few are choſen.

This parable has afforded ample ſubject for the holy Fathers to exhort all Chriſtians to ſhun idleneſs, as diſpleaſing

diſpleaſing to God, and to labour diligently in the affair of their ſalvation. Men are born and appointed to labour in the ſervice of Almighty God, each one according to his ſtate and calling. Let each one be diligent in performing that part of the taſk, which is allotted him, and he will receive his due recompenſe; for God will give to every one according to his works. However unequally the goods of fortune may ſeem to be divided here, we are not to murmur at the ſweet diſpoſition of divine Providence; it is not for this world we have been created, nor is it in this world, that we expect our reward. The reward of an eternal inheritance above is what we expect from God, to whom alone all our actions ſhould be ultimately referred. For God in the next life rewards nothing, but what is done for him in this. From him alone we receive the power of doing good, and when he rewards us for the good, we have done, it is not ſo much our deſerts, as his own gifts, that he crowns.

§ XLIV. *Lazarus raiſed to life. John* 11.

A. D. 33. THE Scribes and Phariſees ſeeing themſelves aimed at, in theſe parables of our bleſſed Saviour, uſed all their art to ſurpriſe him in his words, and to draw ſome expreſſion from him, that might furniſh them with a ſubject of accuſing him to the people. With that view they ſent to aſk him, whether it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæſar? Should he ſay it was, they were ready to cry him down, as an enemy to the liberty of his country; and ſhould he ſay, it was not, king Herod's men were at hand to accuſe him of treaſon againſt the Roman emperor. Jeſus, to whom the thoughts of men were as fully known as their actions, ſaid, Why do ye tempt me, ye hypocrites? Show me the coin of the tribute; and they ſhowed him a Roman penny. He aſked them, whoſe image it was, that was ſtampt upon it? They told him, it was Cæſar's: give then to Cæſar, what belongs to Cæſar, ſaid he, and to God,

God, what belongs to God. The Phariſees ſwelled with vexation to find themſelves thus baffled, and what vexed them ſtill more, they ſaw the fame of Jeſus Chriſt was increaſing daily by the miracles he wrought, of which the moſt celebrated was that of raiſing Lazarus from the tomb.

Lazarus was taken dangerouſly ill in Bethania, and his two ſiſters Martha & Mary gave notice of it to Jeſus, hoping that he would come and heal him: for they knew, that Jeſus loved both them and Lazarus. Upon receiving the meſſage our bleſſed Lord made anſwer, that this ſickneſs of Lazarus was not to death, but for the manifeſtation of his and his father's glory. He ſeemed in no haſte to go near him, but remained two days longer in the place, where he was. Lazarus died in the mean time. Jeſus then told his diſciples, he muſt return into Judea: they endeavoured to diſſuade him from going, where he had lately been in danger of being ſtoned to death. Our friend Lazarus is dead, ſaid he, and I muſt go to raiſe him up. I am glad for your ſake, I was not there, that you may believe; but let us go to him. Then it was, that Saint Thomas expreſſed a fortitude of mind worthy of himſelf and of every follower of Jeſus Chriſt. Let us alſo go, ſaid he, and die with him. When Jeſus came with his diſciples to Bethania, he found that Lazarus had been four days in his grave. Martha no ſooner heard, that Jeſus was come, than ſhe went out to meet him. Lord, if thou hadſt been here, ſaid ſhe, my brother had not died. Thy brother ſhall riſe again, ſaid Jeſus. I know he will riſe in the laſt day, replied Martha, and now I alſo know, that whatſoever thou wilt aſk of God, God will give it thee. I am the reſurrection and the life, ſaid Jeſus; he who believeth in me, altho' he be dead, ſhall live, and whoever liveth and believeth in me, ſhall not die for ever. Doeſt thou believe this? Yes, Lord, anſwered Martha, I believe thou art Chriſt the Son of the living God, and having ſaid that, went to call her ſiſter Mary, who remained ſitting with her friends, that were come from Jeruſalem to condole with her upon her brother's death. Martha

tha whiſpered in her ear, that Jeſus was come and called for her. Mary quickly roſe up and went towards him; for Jeſus ſtill remained in the place, where Martha had met him. The Jews, who did not hear what Martha whiſpered, thought that Mary was going in the hurry of her grief, to weep over her brother's grave: they roſe up and followed her. When ſhe came to Jeſus, ſhe threw herſelf at his feet, and pouring forth a torrent of tears, ſaid, Lord, if thou hadſt been here, my brother had not died. Her friends around were alſo melted into tears; Jeſus likewiſe wept, and was much troubled. He aſked, where they had laid him; they deſired him to come and ſee. He therefore went groaning in ſpirit to the ſepulchre, which was a vault with a ſtone laid over it. Jeſus ordered the ſtone to be taken off; Lord, by this time he ſtinketh, ſaid Martha, for he has been dead four days. Did I not tell thee, replied our Saviour, that if thou believe, thou ſhalt ſee the glory of God. They then took the ſtone away; Jeſus lifted his eyes to heaven, and having addreſſed his Father in a ſhort, but fervent prayer, cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth: And preſently he, who had been dead, came forth bound as he was hands and feet with winding-bands, and his face tied round with a handkerchief. Looſe his bands, ſaid Jeſus, and let him go.

The holy Fathers conſider this reſurrection of Lazarus, as a figure of the ſpiritual reſurrection of a ſoul from the ſtate of ſin. Jeſus Chriſt approaches the ſinner by his holy grace; he calls upon him by his holy word; he warms him into a ſincere regret of his paſt ſins; he animates him with a ſtrong purpoſe of amendment by the infuſion of his holy ſpirit; he unbinds him by the power, which he has given to the miniſters of his Church, and bids him go to lead a new life. Such is the wonderful work, which the Saviour of our ſouls produceth in the order of grace. The tears, the ſighs, the groans and prayer of Jeſus Chriſt at the tomb of Lazarus indicate the difficulty there is in reſuſcitating a ſoul, that has been long dead by a habit of mortal ſin. But however great the difficulty may be, the ſinner, who is deſi-

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rous of life and willing to concur, ought never to deſpair, when he conſiders, how powerful and how good his Redeemer is.

§ XLV. *Zacheus. Luke* 19.

THE Phariſees were ſoon told of the ſurpriſing miracle, which Jeſus had performed in Bethania, and being ſtung with envy at the credit he had acquired thereby, aſſembled in council to deliberate, what meaſures they ſhould take againſt him. If we let this Man alone, ſaid they, for they did not deign to call him by his name, all the world will believe in him. The great miracles he does, will draw the whole nation after him; the jealous Romans will come and deſtroy us. Upon which Caiphas, who was the High-prieſt for that year, took up the diſcourſe, and ſaid, You know nothing, neither do you conſider, that it is expedient for you, one man ſhould die for the people, that the whole nation may not periſh. Caiphas in giving this advice to the Jews, ſaid more than he underſtood, and in quality of High-prieſt propheſied, that Jeſus ſhould die, to ſave all nations of the earth. Therefore from that day they watched every opportunity, that could forward their iniquitous deſigns. Jeſus knew their intentions againſt his life, and walked no longer openly amongſt them, but retired towards the deſert into a town called Ephrem, where he abode with his diſciples. His ſtay there was not very long: for the approaching feſtival of Eaſter called him back to Jeruſalem, where the Phariſees had already given orders for his being apprehended, as ſoon as he ſhould appear. Our bleſſed Lord took his twelve diſciples apart, and ſaid to them, Behold, we are going to Jeruſalem, and the Son of Man ſhall be betrayed to the chief Prieſts, and delivered to the Gentiles to be mocked, and ſcourged and crucified; and on the third day he ſhall riſe again. He was followed by a great multitude, and when he came near to Jericho, Zacheus, a rich and principal man *A. D.* 34.

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amongſt the publicans, had a great deſire to ſee him. Being low of ſtature, and not able to approach on account of the croud, he ran forward and climbed up into a Sycomore-tree, that overlooked the way. When Jeſus came to the place, he looked up, and bade him quickly come down, becauſe he intended to abide with him that day in his houſe. Whenever God calls, no delay is to be made; if his firſt call is not anſwered, he may not call again. Zacheus loſt not a ſingle moment; he made haſte down, and joyfully received the Son of God into his houſe. The people were not a little ſurpriſed, and all murmured at ſeeing Jeſus go to the houſe of a man who was a reputed ſinner. But Zacheus was no longer a ſinner in his heart; he had renounced his wicked practices, and ſtanding in an humble poſture before our Lord, declared the reſolution he had taken, of diſtributing one half of his goods to the poor, and of making reſtitution with the other half to thoſe he had wronged. Jeſus upon that pronounced him a true ſon of Abraham, and declared him to be in the ſtreight path to ſalvation.

The holy Fathers look upon Zacheus as the model of a true converſion. To ſome it may ſeem, as if Zacheus had prevented Jeſus Chriſt, and made the firſt advances towards his juſtification. But in fact Jeſus Chriſt by his ſecret graces had firſt touched his heart, and the viſible attempts, that Zacheus made of coming to Jeſus, were the effects of thoſe inviſible deſires, which the divine mercy had already ſtirred up within him. Zacheus gave to the poor no more than one half of his goods, becauſe God accepts not of the alms, which are not our own to give: for as much of the other half, as he had unjuſtly acquired, was not his, but the property of thoſe he had wronged. The quadruple ſatisfaction he made to his injured neighbour, is a mark of the ſincerity of his repentance: he ſtruck at the very root of that paſſion, which had hitherto been predominant in his heart, and thereby began his converſion upon a ſolid and laſting foundation. When the chief obſtacle, that oppoſes a ſinner's return to God, is once removed by a ſincere repentance,

repentance, his advancement in virtue becomes eaſy. If a neighbour has been maliciouſly injured, either in his goods or reputation, he muſt be indemnified as far as the offending party has it in his power: however difficult the taſk may ſeem to the proud and covetous heart of man, the obligation is indiſpenſable: the ſin is not remitted, ſays Saint Auſtin, unleſs reſtitution be made of what was taken away.

§ XLVI. *Triumph of Jeſus Chriſt. John* 12.

OUR bleſſed Saviour advanced from Jericho to Bethania, where he arrived ſix days before the great feaſt of Eaſter. Lazarus and his two ſiſters received him with great marks of joy and pious gratitude, and a ſupper was prepared for him in the houſe of Simon the Leper. Martha waited, and Lazarus was one of them, who were at table with him. Mary in the interim took a pound of rich and odoriferous ſpikenard, with which ſhe anointed his feet, and wiped them with her hair. Judas the traitor murmured at ſuch waſte, as he was pleaſed to call it, and ſaid ſhe had better have ſold the ointment, and given the price of it to the poor; but Jeſus commended her piety, and bade them not moleſt her, ſince ſhe had thereby anticipated the duty of anointing his body before its burial. The report of Jeſus's being come to Bethania was quickly carried to Jeruſalem, and many of the Jews flocked thither to ſee not only him, but alſo Lazarus, whom he had raiſed from the dead. The Phariſees were more & more exaſperated to ſee ſuch honours paid to Jeſus Chriſt; they obſerved, that Lazarus was the cauſe, why many were induced to believe in him, and therefore thought of putting him likewiſe to death. Jeſus left Bethania the next day, and having advanced as far as mount Olivet, ſent two of his diſciples into an adjoining village, where he told them, they would find an aſs ſtanding with her colt. Untie them, ſaid he, and lead them hither; *A. D.* 34.

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and if any one ſhall offer to hinder or to aſk you queſtions, tell him, the Lord wants them, and forthwith he will let them go. The two diſciples went immediately to the village, and found an aſs, as he had ſaid, ſtanding with her foal; they untied them, and being aſked by ſome, that were ſtanding by, why they did ſo, anſwered, as Jeſus had directed them: no one then offered to hinder them, and they brought away the colt, ſpread their garments, and ſet Jeſus upon the back of him. Jeruſalem at that time was thronged with foreign Jews, who were come from different parts to keep the feaſt of the Paſſover. Theſe people being informed of the wonderful miracles, which Jeſus had wrought, and hearing of his approach towards the city, crouded out to meet and conduct him in triumph: with branches of palms and olives in their hands, they walked in proceſſion before and after him, rending the air with peals of joy and acclamations. Then were fulfilled the words of Iſaiah, ſaying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, *Behold thy King cometh to thee meek and ſitting upon an aſs.* Some ſtrewed the way with their garments, as he came along; ſome cut down boughs of trees, while the multitudes cried out, *Hoſanna to the Son of David! Bleſſed is he, who cometh in the name of the Lord: Hoſanna in the higheſt!*

The holy Fathers write in a moſt exalted ſtile of this triumph of Jeſus Chriſt. By this, ſay they, Chriſt anticipated the triumph of his reſurrection, as in his laſt ſupper he anticipated the myſtery of his paſſion. In vain did the Phariſees and Elders rage, in vain did the Jewiſh chiefs form their cabals againſt the Lord, and againſt his Chriſt. The people yielded to the force of truth, and ran out in ſhoals to grace the triumph and proclaim the praiſes of the Meſſiah. Many alſo of the chief men believed in him, but on account of the Phariſees durſt not declare their belief, leſt they ſhould be turned out of the Synagogue; for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God, ſays Saint John.

§ XLVII.

§ XLVII. *Zeal of Jeſus Chriſt. Mark* 11.

JESUS rode on in triumph amidſt the joyful ſhouts of numerous attendants, till he *A. D.* 34.
came near the gates of Jeruſalem, when the ſight of that unhappy city drew tears from his eyes. With tears of compaſſion he bewailed the blindneſs of a people ſhutting their eyes againſt the light, which offered itſelf to them: he wept for the misfortune of a city, which would not know the day of her viſitation, nor receive the gifts, that appertained to her peace: he ſaw her upon the point of completing all her former crimes by putting him to death, and foretold the ruin, that ſhould ſoon overtake her, in puniſhment thereof. He beheld the final impenitence of that ſtiff-necked people, ſays Saint Gregory, and in the temporal deſtruction of their city, deplored the final reprobation of their ſouls. The citizens were all in motion at his approach; they aſked, who was coming amidſt ſuch a train of followers, and were anſwered, that it was Jeſus, the Prophet from Nazareth of Galilee. Jeſus had no ſooner entered into Jeruſalem, than he went to the Temple, which he found crouded with tables of money-changers, and the chairs of them, who ſold doves. He was provoked to ſee ſuch traffic carried on in a place, which had been ſolely conſecrated to the divine ſervice, and in which nothing ought to be allowed, that did not immediately regard the worſhip of Almighty God. Moved with zeal for his Father's honour, he expreſſed a holy anger againſt the profane abuſe, overturned the chairs and tables, and drove the buyers and ſellers away, telling them, That the houſe of God was a houſe of prayer, and ought not to be thus converted into a den of thieves.

The active zeal, which our meekeſt Saviour ſhowed againſt the profanation of his Father's houſe, ought to put every Chriſtian upon his guard againſt all unbeſeeming behaviour in the place of divine worſhip. Our Churches are infinitely more holy than the ancient Temple of Jeruſalem;

Jeruſalem; they are in a ſpecial manner ſanctified by the preſence of God, who dwells therein, as in his throne; the word of God is there read and heard; the praiſes of God are there ſung; the offering of prayer and ſacrifice is there made. Wherefore, to frequent thoſe holy places with any other view, than that of honouring the ſupreme Being, to make them the ſeat of idle talk, of jeſts, of laughter, of curioſity and ſloth, is an abuſe frequently condemned by the holy Fathers, as an inſult offered to Almighty God in the very Sanctuary. Jeſus Chriſt, who exerted ſuch zeal for his Father's honour in the Temple of Jeruſalem, cannot be indifferent to the diſhonour, that is ſhown him in a Chriſtian Church, by the daily irreverences of thoſe, who profeſs themſelves his followers and adorers; nor can we doubt, but he will one day do himſelf juſtice, and puniſh the offence with the ſeverity it deſerves.

§ XLVIII. *The wedding garment. Mat. 22.*

A. D. 34. OUR bleſſed Saviour, from the time of his public entry into Jeruſalem till he was betrayed by Judas, ſpent the day in the Temple, and about evening retired to Bethania to pray in the garden of Gethſemani. The people were up betimes every morning to receive him, and to hear his exhortations; and ſo diligent were they in their attendance, that the Phariſees durſt not preſume to execute the deſign they had formed of ſeizing him by open violence. Our bleſſed Redeemer, by the force and eloquence of his doctrine, ſought to convince and gain the hearts of his enemies; but finding them hardened againſt his holy word, he confirmed the threat, he had uttered more than once before, of transferring the gift of faith from them to the Gentiles. And leſt the Gentiles might grow vain at ſeeing themſelves preferred before a people, who for ſo many ages had been the favorites of heaven, he took care to inform them, that the choice made in their favour was not to be attributed to any precedent merits of

their own, but to the gratuitous mercy of Almighty God, who called them; he ſtrongly inculcated the neceſſity of correſponding with the divine gifts more faithfully, than the Jews had done, leſt like them they might alſo forfeit the grace of their vocation. This inſtruction he conveyed to them in the following parable.

The kingdom of heaven, ſaid he, is like to a king, who made a marriage for his ſon. A public entertainment was prepared, and notice given for the invited to come. The invitation was ſtrangely neglected, and no one came. The king ſent his ſervants round a ſecond time to exhort the invited to come, and to tell them, that his beeves and fatlings were killed, and every other preparation made for their reception. This ſecond invitation was received no better than the firſt. They all went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandiſe, while others even inſulted the king's ſervants, and put them to death. Provoked at their outrageous conduct, the king ordered a body of his troops to march againſt the murderers, whom he totally deſtroyed, and burnt their city to the ground. That being done, he bade his ſervants go forth into the high-ways, and call all they ſhould find to the marriage feaſt, that the places of the unworthy might be filled up. The ſervants ſpeedily obeyed their maſter's orders; they called in all they found, and the hall of entertainment was crouded with a numerous aſſembly of good and bad mixed together. When they were placed at table, the king went in to ſee them, and perceiving one amongſt them not clothed with a wedding garment, he aſked him, how he came thither without his proper dreſs? The man made no reply; upon which the king told his ſervants to bind him hand and foot, and to caſt him forth into outer darkneſs, where there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth. For many are called, but few are choſen.

The drift of this parable is to ſhow, that the Jews had been firſt invited to believe in Jeſus Chriſt, and upon their refuſal the Gentiles were called to take their place. The king is almighty God; his ſon is Jeſus Chriſt, who by his Incarnation eſpouſed the Church; and the feaſt

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are his ſanctifying graces in this life, and glory in the next. His ſervants are the Prophets and other miniſters of his holy word. To make ourſelves worthy of the graces, which God invites us to receive, we muſt correſpond by our own endeavours: and when we approach theſe myſterious nuptials at the table of our Lord, the leaſt thing we can do, is to appear in a robe ſuitable to the ſanctity and majeſty of Him, who invites us. This nuptial robe, according to the holy Fathers, is the robe of innocence and juſtice, without which we have nothing to expect, but to be turned out of the number of God's elect, and caſt into the dark abyſs. For the fate of that unhappy man in the parable, according to Saint Auſtin, indicates the misfortune of thoſe, who neglect to adorn their ſouls with virtues, who enter into eternity without having the white garment, which at their baptiſm they were told to carry unſpotted before the tribunal of Chriſt. Happy is the man, who ſhall be always upon the watch againſt his maſter's coming, and careful to keep his garments whole and clean, as it is ſaid in the Revelations, that he may not be put to the bluſh of appearing in the ſtate of nakedneſs or ſhame.

§ XLIX. *Parable of the talents. Mat.* 25.

A. D. 34. BEFORE our bleſſed Lord would put an end to his preaching, he deemed it expedient to forewarn the world of the rigours of his juſtice. In the parable of the five wiſe and five fooliſh virgins, he informs us, that however holy our ſtate of life may be, we muſt ſtill be diligent and watchful in every duty; that tho' our actions may ſhine as bright as lamps to the eyes of men, we ſhall not be admitted into heaven, unleſs our charity, like oil, nouriſhes the flame, and gives life to our faith. By the parable of the talents, as it is related by Saint Matthew, he leads us into the knowledge of many other important truths. A certain man, ſays our Lord, going to take a long journey, called his ſervants to him, and diſtributed his goods amongſt them;

them: to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to a third one, according to each one's natural capacity. The two firſt employed themſelves in ſuch a manner, that by their induſtry they doubled the talents, which each of them had received. The third tied his talent up in a handkerchief, and hid it in the ground. The maſter returned ſome time after, and called them all to an account. The ſervant, who had received five talents, offered them back, with an addition of five more, which he had gained by his diligence. Well done, thou good and faithful ſervant, ſaid the maſter; becauſe thou haſt been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many; enter into the joy of thy Lord. Next came the ſervant, who had received two talents, and as he had made an equally good uſe of his time, was rewarded equally with the firſt. The third then preſented himſelf before his maſter, and ſaid, Sir, I knew you to be a hard man, and expect to reap, where you have not ſown. Under that apprehenſion, I therefore went and hid your talent in the ground; behold, here it is. The maſter upon that ſaid to him, O, wicked and ſlothful ſervant, I judge thee by thy own words: for if thou kneweſt that I reap, where I have not ſown, why didſt thou not place my money in the banker's hands, that at my return, I might have received it with profit? The idle man had nothing to alledge in excuſe of his negligence; upon which the maſter, having firſt ordered the talent to be taken from him and given to the other, who had ten, condemned him as an unprofitable ſervant, to be caſt into outer darkneſs, where he was doomed to weep and gnaſh his teeth, far from the light of Heaven, and the preſence of his Creator.

By the talents, the holy Fathers underſtand the gifts of grace and nature, which Almighty God beſtows upon his ſervants in ſuch proportion, as he thinks fit. To ſome he gives more, to ſome leſs; but to all he gives with a view, that they may faithfully employ, whatever they receive, to his honour, and their own improvement in virtue. It is of the uſe and improvement, which we make of God's gifts, that we ſhall be demanded an account

count at the end of life. It will profit us nothing to have made no bad uſe of our talents, or not to have loſt them: nothing is more fatal than to ſtifle the graces, and to bury the gifts of God; we muſt abſolutely improve them to be ſaved. To whom much has been given, of him much will be required.

§ L. *The laſt judgment. Mat.* 25.

A. D. 34. OUR bleſſed Saviour finiſhed his diſcourſes to the people, by announcing to them the terrors of the laſt judgment. The ſupine negligence of men in the affair of ſalvation, and their great unwillingneſs to do their duty upon the nobler principles of love, made it neceſſary to rouſe their attention by ſuggeſting the motives of fear. The great and bitter day will come, when the myſterious ways of Providence ſhall be diſcloſed to the open view of men and angels, and to each one ſhall be aſſigned the everlaſting lot, that his works deſerve. The day will be uſhered in with the moſt foreboding ſigns of calamity and miſery, which ſhall make men wither away with fear at the expectation of evils, which ſhall then come upon the whole world. For there ſhall be ſigns in the ſun, moon, and ſtars; the earth ſhall tremble, and the powers of heaven ſhall be ſhaken. An Angel will ſound the dreadful trumpet, which ſhall be heard from the higheſt heavens down to the nethermoſt abyſs, and a voice will cry; Ariſe ye dead and come to judgment. In the twinkling of an eye the dead will riſe from their graves, and ſtand before the tribunal of Chriſt, who will judge every one according to his works. Surrounded by myriads of Angels the Son of Man will then appear coming in a cloud with great power and majeſty. In a moment he will ſeparate the good from the bad, as the ſhepherd ſeparates his ſheep from the goats; the ſheep he will place on his right hand, and the goats on his left. To the firſt he will ſay, Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, and poſſeſs the kingdom, which has been prepared for you from the beginning

ginning of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirſty, and you gave me to drink; I was a ſtranger, and you took me in; I was naked, and you clothed me; I was ſick, and you comforted me; in priſon, and you viſited me. For whatever you have done of this kind to any of my little ones, you have done it to me. Then ſhall he turn to them on his left hand and ſay; Depart from me, ye curſed, into eternal fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels; for you gave me neither to eat, nor to drink, nor have you relieved me in any other diſtreſs, in which you ſaw me. And when they ſhall ſay, at what time, Lord, have we ſeen you in diſtreſs, and have not ſuccoured you? He will anſwer, As long as you did it not to one of theſe leaſt, you did it not to me. The juſt ſhall then go into everlaſting life, and the wicked into everlaſting puniſhment.

Such ſhall be the end of that tremendous day. How dreadfully ſurpriſed will the reprobate then be, and how different will be their thoughts from what they are at preſent. The wicked are by a merciful Redeemer ſentenced to endleſs torments for having neglected the duties of fraternal charity. From whence it is evinced, that to be ſaved we muſt not only abſtain from evil, but alſo do good. To compaſſionate our brethren in their ſufferings, and to help them in their corporal & ſpiritual wants, is a Chriſtian duty. They are the myſtical members of Chriſt's body; whatever charity we do or refuſe to them, Chriſt looks upon it, as done or refuſed to himſelf. Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall find mercy. The beſt grounds we can have of confidence in the divine mercy, is the exerciſe of charity towards our brethren.

§ LI.

§ LI. *The laſt ſupper. Mat.* 26.

A. D. 34. THE time fixed from eternity for the world's redemption was upon the eve of its accompliſhment; it was the middle of Daniel's ſeventieth week of years, when, according to the prophecy, Chriſt was to be denied by his people, and put to death. Judas Iſcariot, one of the twelve, had already bargained with the Phariſees for a certain ſum of money to betray him into their hands. Jeſus perfectly knew what was to happen to him; he foreſaw the malice and contrivance of the plots, that were laid againſt his life, and permitted them to take their courſe; for his time was now come: he freely met the danger, and concealed himſelf no longer from his enemies. But before he ſuffered, he would eat the Paſchal lamb with his diſciples for the laſt time. He directed them to a certain houſe in the city, where he told them to prepare the ſupper in a large dining-room, which the man of the houſe would ſhow them. They went, they found every thing as he had ſaid, and there they prepared the Paſſover. At the appointed hour in the evening, Jeſus ſat down, and the twelve Apoſtles with him. Moſt earneſtly have I deſired, ſaid he, to eat this Paſchal ſupper with you, before I ſuffer. For from this time I will not eat it, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God, nor will I drink of the fruit of the vine, till the kingdom of God come. Take the chalice, and divide it amongſt you. You have continued with me in my temptations, and I diſpoſe to you, as my Father hath diſpoſed to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and may ſit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael.

Our bleſſed Lord had promiſed his diſciples, *John* vi. that he would give them the living bread, which was his fleſh, for the life of the world, and this was the day, the very eve of his paſſion, fixed for the fulfilling of his promiſe. Knowing that his hour was come, when he ſhould paſs out of this world to the Father, and having loved his own, who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

end. When ſupper was therefore done, ſays Saint John, he roſe from table, laid aſide his garments, and having girted himſelf round with a towel, poured water into a baſon, and began to waſh his diſciples feet. After he had waſhed, and wiped them with the towel, with which he was girted, he took his garments, and ſitting down again, ſaid to them, Do you know what I have done to you? If I, your Lord and Maſter, have waſhed your feet, you alſo ought to waſh one another's feet: for I have given an example for you to follow. Having ſaid that, he was troubled in ſpirit, and declared, that one of them would betray him. The diſciples were alarmed, and aſked, who the traitor was? It is he, ſaid our Lord, to whom I ſhall offer a morſel of bread dipped in the diſh, and he offered it to Judas Iſcariot: Judas, having taken it, immediately went out; and it was night. Jeſus therefore being at table, after he had waſhed his diſciples feet, took bread into his ſacred and venerable hands, bleſſed, broke, and gave it to his diſciples, ſaying, Take and eat, *For this is my body*. After that, he in like manner took and bleſſed the cup, which ſtood with wine in it upon the table, bidding them all drink of it, ſaying, *This is my blood of the new teſtament, which ſhall be ſhed for many unto the remiſſion of ſins:* and then added, *Do this for a commemoration of me*. By which laſt words he empowered and commiſſioned his Apoſtles, and their ſucceſſors in the Prieſthood to do and conſecrate the ſame, and thereby verified the prediction of the Pſalmiſt, who had ſtyled him a Prieſt for ever according to the order of Melchiſedech. This is the clean oblation, which the Prophet Malachy ſaid ſhould be offered to God in every place, from the riſing to the ſetting of the ſun; and this is daily offered in the Church of Chriſt throughout the world by the miniſtry of his prieſts, to whom he has given the power to do, what he did at his laſt ſupper, that is, to conſecrate the bread and wine in his name, and to change them into his Body and his Blood.

The

The ſacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord, is a myſtery ſo ſublime and incomprehenſible to human weakneſs, that nothing but the clear and expreſs word of God could induce us to believe it. But ſince Jeſus Chriſt himſelf ſo poſitively tells us, ſays Saint Cyril of Jeruſalem, *This is my Body, This is my Blood*, who will dare to call his word in queſtion, or doubt whether his body and his blood be really there? At Cana he had changed water into wine, and at his laſt ſupper he changed wine into blood. For under the appearance of bread he gives us his Body, continues the holy Doctor, and under the appearance of wine he gives us his Blood. *Catecheſi Myſtagog.* 4. What was bread before the conſecration, ſays Saint Ambroſe, becomes the Body of Chriſt after conſecration, and his Body is truly there. Before the word of conſecration, the Body of Chriſt was not there; but he ſpoke, and there it was. For to God, who by his word made the world out of nothing, nothing is impoſſible. Hence the chalice, which we bleſs, ſays Saint Paul, is it not the communication of the blood of Chriſt? And the Bread, which we break, is it not a participation of the Body of our Lord? Therefore whoſoever ſhall eat this Bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, ſhall be guilty of the Body and Blood of our Lord.

§ LII. *Jeſus in the garden of Gethſemani. Mat.* 26.

A. D. 34. AFTER Judas was gone out to concert meaſures with the Phariſees for the execution of his treacherous deſign, our bleſſed Saviour made an admirable diſcourſe to the eleven, that remained. In words the moſt pathetic and expreſſive of his love, he exhorted them to a ſteadineſs in the divine ſervice, and to a perfect love of their neighbour, as the diſtinctive mark of their being his diſciples. Let not your heart be troubled, ſaid he; becauſe I go to the Father, and will prepare a place for you: for in my Father's houſe there are many manſions. You believe in God,

believe

believe alſo in me. I will not leave you orphans, I will come again, and will take you to myſelf, that where I am, you alſo may be. If you love me, keep my commandments: he who loveth me, ſhall be loved by my Father, and I will love him: whatſoever you ſhall aſk the Father in my name, that will I do. Peace I leave with you; my peace, ſuch as the world cannot give, I give unto you. I will aſk the Father, and he will give you another comforter, the Spirit of truth, who ſhall abide with you, and teach you all things.

He addreſſed himſelf in a particular manner to Saint Peter, and informed him of the Devil's malicious deſigns againſt him; but I have prayed, ſaid he, to the Father for you, that your faith may not fail. He likewiſe admoniſhed them all of the great trial they would meet with that very night; and how they would fly & forſake him in the middle of his enemies. Saint Peter, who did not then know himſelf, anſwered with his uſual confidence, that whatever the reſt might do, he at leaſt would not abandon him, but was ready to accompany him even to priſon and death itſelf. He ſpoke the generous diſpoſition of his heart, but relied too much upon his own ſtrength: he had not yet learnt to miſtruſt his weakneſs, and therefore our bleſſed Saviour told him, that before the crowing of the cock, he ſhould thrice deny him. Jeſus Chriſt after that made a moſt fervent prayer to his eternal Father, not only for his Apoſtles, but alſo for them, who through their word ſhould believe in him; which when he had done, he went forth with his diſciples, and paſſing over the torrent of Cedron, retired according to his cuſtom into the mountain of Olives. His eleven diſciples followed him to the place called Gethſemani, where he bade them ſtop, while he ſhould go into the garden to pray, as he had often done before. He took with him Peter, James, and John, his three favorite apoſtles, to be the witneſſes of this firſt ſcene of his bitter paſſion. For then it was, that he began more ſenſibly to feel the infirmities of human nature; then it was, that all our griefs and miſeries flowed in with full tide upon him. Overwhelmed with ſadneſs, he told his diſciples,

diſciples, that his ſoul was ſorrowful even unto death: he bade them ſtay there and pray, that they might not ſink under the temptation. He then withdrew from them to the diſtance of a ſtone's throw, and kneeling down ſaid, Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me: but, if that cannot be without my drinking it, let thy will be done, not mine. He roſe up, came to his diſciples, and found them aſleep. He upbraided Peter for not being able to watch one hour with him, commanded them to watch and pray againſt the temptation, and retiring again repeated the ſame tender prayer, in the ſame ſubmiſſive words, to his heavenly Father. Full of concern for his dear diſciples, he ſoon after viſited them again, and found them ſtill ſleeping, for their eyes were heavy: he left them, went back again, and prayed the third time, ſaying, My Father, if this chalice may not paſs away, but I muſt drink it, thy will be done. The anguiſh of his mind increaſed ſtill more and more, which threw him at laſt into a bitter agony. Thick drops, as it were of blood, guſhed thro' the pores of his body, and trickled down upon the ground. In the midſt of this diſtreſs he was comforted by an Angel, and notwithſtanding the violent agitation of his ſoul, he prayed the longer.

This myſterious agony of the Son of God is a ſubject of aſtoniſhment to the holy Fathers; on one hand they contemplate Jeſus Chriſt, the ſplendor of his Father's glory, and the figure of his ſubſtance, ſorrowful and trembling at the proſpect of his enſuing paſſion; and on the other, behold his martyrs meeting their torments with magnanimity and joy. But ſince he has taken upon himſelf our infirmities, and has borne our ſorrows, Jeſus Chriſt is become the fortitude of the Saints. Encouraged by his example, and ſtrengthened by his grace, the zealous Chriſtian joyfully ſubmits to hardſhips and diſtreſſes, as he has ſeen his Redeemer do before him. In the time of trial and temptation prayer is his refuge, it is his beſt and only comfort; it is taught him by the word and example of Jeſus Chriſt in the garden of Gethſemani. Poor and exerciſed in labours

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§ LIII. *Jeſus taken by the Jews. Mat.* 26.

AFTER our bleſſed Lord had ended his prayer, he came to his diſciples for the third time, and ſaid, Ariſe, let us go, the traitor is at hand; and while he was yet ſpeaking, behold! Judas, at the head of a rude rabble with lanterns, clubs and ſwords entered the garden. It was a place well known to the traitor, for he had frequently accompanied his maſter thither, when he went to pray. The ſoldiers did not know Jeſus, and might eaſily have miſtaken another for him, if Judas had not agreed to give them a ſignal: the ſignal he agreed upon was a kiſs: whomſoever I ſhall kiſs, ſaid he, that is the man; hold him faſt. The traitor therefore upon entering the garden went ſtreight to Jeſus, and ſaluted him with a kiſs. Friend, ſaid our bleſſed Saviour to him, for what art thou come? Is it with a kiſs, that thou betrayeſt the Son of man? The multitude drew near, and Jeſus knowing all that was to happen, advanced to meet them. With a voice, that beſpoke his divinity, he aſked them, whom they wanted? and they anſwering Jeſus of Nazareth, he ſaid, I am he. His words ſtruck terror into them, they inſtantly drew back, and fell to the ground. From this ſingle circumſtance it appears, that Jeſus ſubmitted to his enemies not for want of power, but by the free conſent of his own will. He aſked them a ſecond time, whom they wanted? and they repeating Jeſus of Nazareth, I have already told you, ſaid he, that I am the perſon; if therefore you ſeek me, let theſe go their way unhurt. In the midſt of danger Jeſus ſeemed regardleſs of himſelf, & only anxious about his friends; he diſdained not to become

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a ſupplicant for his diſciples ſafety, whilſt he abandoned his own to the diſcretion of his enemies, as the executioners of his Father's will. Saint Peter made ſome efforts to defend his divine maſter, drew his ſword, and ſtriking at Malchus, a ſervant of the High-prieſt, cut off his right ear. That was not the zeal, nor the defence, which our bleſſed Saviour required at that time: unwilling to give the leaſt cauſe of complaint to his enemies, he miraculouſly healed the ſervant's ear, and reprimanded his Apoſtle for having ſtruck him. He ſtood not in need of human arms, when at his requeſt the Father had legions of Angels ready to defend him. The tribune therefore and his band laid hold of Jeſus, and bound him. Meek as a lamb, which is led to ſlaughter, he only ſaid, that they came armed with ſwords & clubs, as if they had had a robber to ſecure; that he had ſat daily amongſt them teaching in the Temple, and no one had offered to touch him; but that it was now their hour, and the power of darkneſs. His diſciples then left him, and fled, like a ſcattered flock, which by ſome cruel ſtroke is bereft of its ſhepherd.

§ LIV. *Jeſus before Caiphas. Mat.* 26.

A. D. 34. JESUS, being abandoned by his diſciples, was dragged along by his enemies into the city, and led before Annas, the father-in-law of Caiphas, the High-prieſt for that year. Annas did not detain him very long, but ſent him, bound as he was, to Caiphas's houſe, where the Scribes and Elders were aſſembled. The High-prieſt began to queſtion him concerning his diſciples and his doctrine. Jeſus anſwered, that he had ſpoken openly to the world; that he had always delivered his doctrine in the Synagogue and in the Temple, and had taught nothing, which was not publicly known; that he need only aſk the people, and they would inform him of the things, they had heard. Upon that one of the ſervants, who were ſtanding by, gave Jeſus a blow, ſaying, Is it ſo thou anſwereſt the High-

High-prieſt? To which Jeſus meekly replied, If I have ſpoken wrong, tell me in what; if well, why doeſt thou ſtrike me? The chief Prieſts and whole council were fully reſolved to procure his death; but to proceed with ſome outward form and appearance of juſtice, an accuſation was to be brought againſt him, and witneſſes produced in ſupport of the charge. A mercenary croud appeared, ready to ſwear as they ſhould be directed; but the evidence they gave, was inconſiſtent and contradictory: amongſt other accuſations of their own forging, two falſe witneſſes declared, they had heard him ſay, he could deſtroy the Temple of God, and in three days time build it up again. Jeſus was ſilent. Caiphas roſe up, and aſked him, if he made no reply to the charge, which theſe witneſſes had brought againſt him. Jeſus was ſtill ſilent: upon which the High-prieſt adjured him, in the name of the living God, to tell them, whether he were the Chriſt or not. Jeſus then anſwered, If I tell you, you will not believe me; and if I aſk you, you will neither anſwer nor let me go. Nevertheleſs, I ſay to you, Hereafter you ſhall ſee the Son of man ſitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Art thou then the Son of God? they all cried; and he anſwered, So you ſay, and I am. The High-prieſt, hearing that, rent his garments, and cried out, He hath blaſphemed; there needs no farther proof; you have heard the blaſphemy from his own mouth: what is your opinion? They all exclaimed, He is guilty of death, and immediately left the court. Then it was, that the ſoldiers and inſolent rabble began to inſult and torment the innocent Jeſus. They tore off his beard and hair; they ſpat upon his face; they mocked and buffeted him for their diverſion; they blindfolded his eyes, and in deriſion bade him gueſs, who it was that ſtruck him. Such was his treatment during the whole night.

Saint Peter had followed his divine maſter at a diſtance from the garden of Gethſemani, and being deſirous of ſeeing

ing what the event would be, procured admittance into Caiphas's houſe. As he was ſtanding amongſt the ſervants warming himſelf at the fire, a ſervant-maid came up and aſked, if he did not belong to Jeſus of Nazareth? Peter no longer felt the courage or the zeal, he had ſhown to defend his maſter in the garden: he trembled at the woman's voice, and denied him; and immediately the cock crowed. He was again aſked the ſame queſtion, and again he not only denied his maſter, but moreover added, that he did not even know any ſuch man. About an hour after, a ſervant of the High-prieſt, and kinſman of Malchus, whoſe ear Peter had cut off, declared, that he had ſeen him with Jeſus in the garden; and others ſaid, that his very language betrayed him, and proved him to be a Galilean. Peter then began to ſwear, and moſt ſolemnly proteſt, that he did not ſo much as know the man, they ſpoke of. The cock crowed at that moment. Jeſus at the ſame time turned round, and looked at him. Peter then remembered, what Jeſus had told him after ſupper: ſtung with ſhame and remorſe, he immediately went out, and wept bitterly.

The fall of that great Apoſtle is a ſtriking inſtance of human weakneſs. Wonderful is the conduct of Almighty God in permitting the man to fall, whom he had choſen to be the head and chief pillar of his Church. Peter's ſin was not the reſult of a corrupt heart; it ſprung from cowardice, not malice. He ſoon recollected himſelf, and eagerly ſeized the firſt grace, that called him back to repentance. He roſe the moment he became ſenſible of his fall: his actions ſpoke the unfeigned ſentiments of a contrite heart. I hear not the voice of St. Peter lamenting his fall, ſays Saint Ambroſe, but I ſee his tears. Happy tears! whoſe ſilent flow obtained the ſinner's pardon.

§ LV.

§ LV. *Jesus before Pilate. Mat. 27.*

THE Jewish council met again betimes in the morning, to finish their murderous plan against Jesus, and the result of their debate was to accuse him before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. Jesus therefore, like a public malefactor, bound in chains, was led from Caiphas to the governor's hall, where the chief Priests and Scribes were at the gate ready to accuse him; for they would not enter under the roof of an idolater, lest they should be defiled, and become unfit to partake of their Paschal ceremonies. Pilate therefore went out to them, and asked, What accusation they brought against the man? They answered in general terms, that if he were not a malefactor, they would not have brought him thither. Pilate would admit of no such indeterminate accusation, but bade them take and judge him according to their own laws. The Jews replied, that they no longer had the power of sentencing any man to death, of which they had judged him guilty, and began to accuse him of crimes against the state. We have found this man, said they, perverting our nation, forbidding tribute to be paid to Cæsar, and saying, that he is Christ the King. Pilate went into the hall again, and calling Jesus, asked him, if he were a King. Jesus answered, I am; but my kingdom is not of this world: if it were, my servants would certainly strive to prevent my being delivered to the Jews. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, that I might give testimony to the truth. What is the truth? replied Pilate; and without waiting for an answer, went out again to the Jews, and declared, that he found nothing to condemn in him. The Jews being apprehensive, lest the Judge should acquit him, grew more earnest, and tumultuously cried out, that he had been stirring the people up to sedition thro' the whole country of Judea from Galilee to Jerusalem. Upon the mention of Galilee, Pilate asked, if Jesus were not of that province? and

A. D. 34.

and being told he was, ſent him away to Herod, who was king of Galilee. Herod was at that time in Jeruſalem, and having heard much of Jeſus Chriſt, was glad of the opportunity, he had long wiſhed for, of ſeeing him, and hoped he would work ſome miracle in his preſence. When Jeſus came before him, he aſked him a variety of queſtions, but receiving no anſwer, treated him as a ſimpleton, expoſed him in a white robe to the mockery of his guards, and ſent him back to Pilate. Pilate upon that called together the chief prieſts, the magiſtrates and people, and told them, that there were no grounds for the charge, they had brought againſt Jeſus; that Herod alſo was of the ſame opinion, and had ſent him back uncondemned, as he went. Pilate therefore tried every expedient to ſet Jeſus free, without expoſing himſelf to danger: for he plainly ſaw, that the Jews had accuſed him out of meer ſpite and envy. At the Paſchal time it was cuſtomary for the governor to releaſe ſome one of the priſoners, as the people ſhould chuſe. There was in priſon a notorious criminal, by name Barabbas, who in a ſeditious riot had committed murder. With this miſcreant, the worſt and moſt odious of men, Jeſus was ſet in competition for the people's choice. Pilate aſked them, which of the two he ſhould releaſe, Jeſus or Barabbas? Not him, but Barabbas, was the cry. It was in vain to repreſent the innocence of the one, and the guilt of the other. Away with him, they cried; give us Barabbas, away with Jeſus to be crucified. Pilate was diſtreſſed; he knew not which way to turn, doubtful whether to reſiſt or yield. He was in hopes of moving them to compaſſion, and of inducing them to aſk for the releaſe of the innocent, when they ſhould ſee him ſuffer: by a barbarous and wicked policy he condemned Jeſus to be ſcourged. Jeſus was therefore led into the Pretor's court, ſtript and tied to a pillar, and a whole band of ſoldiers ordered out to glut their cruelty upon him.

Judas ſeeing the violence of theſe proceedings, and being racked with remorſe at the heinouſneſs of his treaſon, carried back the thirty pieces of ſilver, for which

he

he had ſold his maſter, to the chief prieſts and ancients, ſaying, I have ſinned in betraying innocent blood. What is that to us, ſaid they, look thou to it. Upon which he threw down the money in the Temple, went his ways, and hanged himſelf in deſpair. Judas Iſcariot, from being an Apoſtle, became the worſt of reprobates. From being unfaithful to the divine grace, he at firſt became a murmurer againſt the honours done to Jeſus Chriſt: his avarice then prompted him to ſell his maſter to the Jews, and deſpair made him finiſh all his other crimes by ſuicide. The enemy of our ſalvation ſtill tries by the ſame arts to lead men gradually from their duty, and to plunge them into vice. In the beginning he conceals the malice of his temptations; he diſcloſes not the abyſs, into which he intends to throw them; he dreſſes up the ſin in ſuch deceitful colours, that its enormity is not ſeen, before it is conſented to. He then artfully removes the veil, and unfolds the crime in its blackeſt ſhape; he ſo magnifies the ſhame or the difficulty of penance, ſo exaggerates the rigours of divine juſtice, that he frightens the ſinner from repentance, and drives him to deſpair. Not to fall into the diſmal gulf, grievous ſinners no longer ought to dwell upon the enormous crimes, they have committed, than it may help them to repent: they ought by turns to relieve the mind, and look up to the divine mercy. God is always good and merciful to the repenting ſinner: he, who has ſuffered and died for ſinners, never rejects the ſighs of a contrite and humble heart.

§ LVI. *Behold the Man. Mat.* 27.

WHEN the ſoldiers had ſatiated their barbarity with whips and ſcourges upon the body of Jeſus, they proceeded to other acts of cruelty and inſult. They wove a crown of ſharp thorns, and ſet it upon his head; they threw an old purple garment round his ſhoulders, and put a reed by way of ſceptre in his right hand; they bent their knee in deri- *A. D.* 34.

ſion,

ſion, as before a mock-king; they ſpat upon him, they ſmote him on the face, and taking the reed from his hand, they ſtruck him on the head, ſaying, Hail! king of the Jews! The lamentable plight, to which Jeſus Chriſt was then reduced, moved the heart of Pilate, and he was in hopes, that the ſight of ſo piteous an object might alſo move the Jews. With that view he took him up into a conſpicuous place, and ſhowed him to the people, ſaying, Behold the man! Veſted with the crown of thorns and purple garment, Jeſus was no ſooner ſeen, than the cries of an enraged rabble were heard from every ſide, calling out, Crucify him! crucify him! Pilate pleaded for him, and aſked, What harm he had done? He has made himſelf the Son of God, they cried, and according to the Law he therefore ought to die. When Pilate heard this, he grew more and more alarmed; he entered into the hall again, and aſked Jeſus, from whence he was? Jeſus gave him no anſwer. Doeſt thou not ſpeak to me, ſaid Pilate, and knoweſt thou not, that I have power either to crucify or to releaſe thee? Thou wouldſt not have any power againſt me, replied our Saviour, unleſs it were given thee from above. The Jews continued crying out to Pilate, If thou releaſe this man, thou art not Cæſar's friend. Pilate therefore led Jeſus forth about the ſixth hour, and ſitting down upon the judgment-ſeat, ſaid to the Jews, Behold your king. Away with him! cried out the Jews, Away with him! Crucify him! Shall I then crucify your king? ſaid Pilate. We have no king but Cæſar, replied the Prieſts; and whoſoever maketh himſelf a king, ſpeaketh againſt Cæſar. Theſe words awakened the fears of an ambitious courtier, who was not diſpoſed to riſk either his fortune or his favour with the Emperor for the ſake of doing juſtice, and of protecting the innocent. He called for a baſon of water, and as if he could waſh himſelf clean of the crime, which he was going to complete, he waſhed his hands before the people, and declared himſelf innocent of the blood of that juſt man. Let his blood fall upon us, and upon our children, cried the hardened Jews. Pilate then releaſed Barabbas according to their

requeſt,

requeſt, and delivered Jeſus unto them to be crucified.

This weak, but barbarous compliance of Pontius Pilate againſt the dictates of his own conſcience, is a melancholy proof of the ſway, which ambition and ſelf-intereſt have over the minds of worldly men. The known innocence and ſacred character of Jeſus Chriſt had little influence upon a man, who was ready to make a ſacrifice of every thing, but his own fortune. Pilate had indeed ſome inbred notions of equity; he had naturally an inclination to protect oppreſſed innocence; but thoſe honeſt ſentiments were baniſhed from his breaſt the very moment, he was threatened with the Emperor's diſpleaſure, nor could they be recalled by any warning, that his wife had been inſpired to give him. Great reſolution is neceſſary not to be drawn from our duty by a deſire of pleaſing men; great ſtruggle is required not to be borne down the torrent of our paſſions, when puſhed by worldly fears and intereſt. The advice of friends, and our own reflections are inſufficient, without the grace of Jeſus Chriſt, to aid and ſupport our feeble efforts. Pilate had the grace, which was abundantly ſufficient to have preſerved him from the ſin, but his own co-operation was wanting. It is our duty therefore to watch and pray, not only that we may receive the graces of Jeſus Chriſt, but that we may be alſo faithful in co-operating with the graces we receive.

§ LVII. *Jeſus carries his croſs.* *Mat.* 27.

THE Jews having at length extorted the ſentence, which they had been ſo obſtinately bent upon, carried it into immediate execution. They had already prepared a huge Croſs, the ignominious inſtrument of their barbarity: they laid it upon the ſhoulders of our bleſſed Lord to carry to the mountain of Calvary, the place of their public executions. Two thieves were condemned to be crucified at the ſame time; ſo that literally fulfilled were the words of Iſaiah, ſaying, *A. D.* 34.

that

that he ſhould be ranked with ſinners. Jeſus therefore went forth bearing his Croſs, burdened with our iniquities, as the Prophet ſaid, and carrying all the griefs, that a ſinful world had heaped upon him. He went forth from the holy city of Jeruſalem towards the mountain, amidſt the hiſſes of an inſulting multitude, that crouded round to be ſpectators of his ſufferings. His ſufferings of the morning had already drained his ſtrength, he was too enfeebled to ſtand under the heavy Croſs, and to go on, as faſt as they would have him. Therefore laying hold of one Simon of Cyrene, they made him take and carry the croſs after Jeſus to the Mount.

The Croſs or the yoke of Chriſt is borne by two, by Jeſus Chriſt and the Chriſtian, who ſuffers for Chriſt's ſake. Simon the Cyrenean was engaged to help the Son of God in carrying his Croſs; God himſelf enables us to carry ours. By his grace he ſo ſtrengthens us in our afflictions, that we not only bear them with eaſe, but receive them with a kind of inward ſatisfaction. Comforted by his example let us reſignedly ſubmit to the croſs, that is laid upon us, and in ſilent patience follow our divine Leader to the holy mountain: he ſuffers us not to be loaded above our ſtrength; by ſpiritual comforts he ſweetens his ſervice, and makes the burden light.

Many devout perſons, and amongſt them the pious women, who were unſhaken in the ſervice of Jeſus Chriſt, followed him, as cloſe as they could, and by their tears and ſighs expreſſed, how much they ſhared in his ſufferings. He turned about to them, as he went along, not for the ſake of receiving any conſolation from them; for it is not to creatures we muſt turn in our afflictions; but he turned to give them comfort. Ye daughters of Jeruſalem, ſaid he, weep not for me, but weep for yourſelves and children. For the time will come, when it ſhall be ſaid, Happy are the barren, and happy are the breaſts, which have not given ſuck. Men ſhall call upon the hills to cover them, and upon the mountains to hide them. For if to the green wood they do

theſe things, what will happen to the dry? Such tenderneſs of affection, expreſſed by the Son of God in ſuch circumſtances to his faithful followers, cannot fail of moving every Chriſtian, who will ſeriouſly conſider. If we only remember, who Jeſus is, what he ſuffers and for whom, we ſhall be aſhamed to complain of the ſlight and paſſing ſufferings, that fall to our ſhare. Or ſhould weak nature be ſtill tempted to murmur or to grow impatient, we muſt then reflect, that the ſufferings of this life are but ſhort, that if we ſhare in the ſufferings of our Redeemer, and bear them as we ought, we ſhall likewiſe ſhare with him in his glory.

§ LVIII. *Jeſus upon Mount Calvary. Mat. 27.*

JESUS being come to the top of Mount Calvary, on which he was to offer the great ſacrifice of himſelf for the world's redemption, was immediately preſented with a draught of wine mixed with gall: he did but taſte and refuſed to drink it. He was then ſtript of his clothes, ſtretched upon the Croſs, his ſacred hands and feet bored thro' with nails, and faſtened to the wood. It was the ſixth hour of the day, and a mournful darkneſs ſpread itſelf over the face of heaven. The Croſs was ſet upright, and fixed in the earth, the whole weight of his body bearing upon the bleeding wounds of his hands and feet; above his head was an inſcription, written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, that all might know him to be Jeſus of Nazareth King of the Jews. On each ſide of him, as if he were of all malefactors the moſt notorious, were crucified two thieves. He hung in the middle, an adorable ſpectacle to the world, to the Angels and to men, Jeſus Chriſt the mediator of peace between earth and heaven, bleeding and dying for the love of mankind. The people with unfeeling hearts ſtood looking on, and the rulers with them derided him in his torments. They paſſed under his Croſs ſcornfully wagging their heads and exclaiming,

claiming; Thou, who canſt deſtroy the Temple of God, and in three days build it up again, now ſave thyſelf; if thou art the Son of God, come down from the Croſs, and we will believe thee. The chief prieſts and elders of the people turned his very miracles into a contempt of his power. He ſaved others, they cried, let him now ſave himſelf; he truſted in God; let God now deliver him, if he will, for he ſaid, I am the Son of God. Jeſus thus inſulted and blaſphemed amidſt his ſufferings ſought no revenge; his thoughts were the thoughts of peace; breathing charity and benevolence for his cruel enemies, he cried, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* And one of the thieves who were hanging by him, blaſphemed like the reſt, ſaying, If thou be Chriſt, ſave thyſelf and us. But the other rebuked his wicked companion, and proclaiming the innocence of Jeſus Chriſt, begged to be remembered by him, when he ſhould come into his kingdom; Jeſus anſwered him in theſe comfortable words, *Amen I ſay to thee, This day thou ſhalt be with me in Paradiſe.* Simeon's prophecy to the Virgin mother was now fulfilled. Pierced with a ſword of grief, Mary approached her agonizing Son, and ſtood at the foot of the Croſs with John the beloved diſciple. Jeſus looked down and ſaw them; with expiring voice he recommended them to each other; to his mother he ſaid, *Woman, behold thy ſon,* and to John, *Behold thy mother.* To the afflictions, which Jeſus then ſuffered in every part of his body, nothing could be added but thoſe of his ſoul. Covered with wounds from the ſole of his foot to the crown of his head, he was truly that man of pains and ſorrows, as Iſaiah had deſcribed him. A ſingle ray of the beatific viſion, which his ſoul always enjoyed, would have cheered away all his griefs at once, had he not miraculouſly ſuſpended its influence at that hour, and denied himſelf every conſolation, that could ſooth his bitter agony. The myſterious dereliction of our bleſſed Lord upon the Croſs is a fitter ſubject for pious meditation than deſcription. It was extreme, it forced this tender exclamation from him, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me!*

Jeſus

Jeſus knowing that all things were now accompliſhed, ſaid, *I thirſt*, upon which the ſoldiers dipping a ſponge into vinegar, and faſtening it to a reed, put it to his mouth, and when he had taken the vinegar, he ſaid, *It is conſummated*: every circumſtance, which the Prophets had foretold relating to his mortal life and paſſion was now fulfilled. Jeſus Chriſt had hung near three hours upon the Croſs, his ſacred humanity was ſpent with ſuffering; nothing more remained than to pay the laſt tribute due to his heavenly Father for the redemption of the world. The ſun was eclipſed, and an univerſal darkneſs ſat upon the earth untill the ninth hour: the earth quaked, the graves were opened, the rocks ſplit aſunder, and the veil of the Temple rent from top to bottom. Jeſus Chriſt at the laſt gaſp and in the agony of death, with a loud voice exclaimed, *Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit*, and ſaying this, bowed his head and expired.

The myſtery of the paſſion and death of Jeſus Chriſt upon the Croſs is ſo far removed above the reach of human underſtanding, that unleſs the divine Spirit takes away the veil from our eyes, in vain ſhall we ſtrive to comprehend it. Chriſt dies upon a croſs, ſays Saint Bernard, and thereby merits all our love; he gives us his holy Spirit, and thereby excites our love. By the help of faith we may contemplate Jeſus Chriſt crucified; but without the gift of his holy Spirit we ſhall not love him. Let us then with gratitude approach the tree of life, and with affection gather the fruits thereof. Since the Son of God has been pleaſed to give us his life, there is no other mercy, which we may not hope to obtain thro' his blood and paſſion; for with him there is plentiful redemption.

§ LIX.

§ LIX. *Jeſus in the Sepulchre. Mat.* 27.

A. D. 34. THE wonderful ſacrifice of the Croſs being accompliſhed, the prodigies and ſigns, that accompanied it, ſtruck the ſpectators with religious awe; they changed their inſults into ſighs, and returned knocking their breaſts into the city. The centurion, who commanded the ſoldiers upon the mountain, had been particularly attentive to every thing, that had paſſed, and publicly declared the Man, whom he ſaw expire, to be truly the Son of God. The ſacred body of our Saviour remained hanging upon the croſs, till Pilate at the requeſt of the Jews gave orders about it. For the next day being the great and ſolemn ſabbath of the Paſchal week, the Jews petitioned Pilate that the bodies might be taken down from their croſſes and carried away that evening. The ſoldiers therefore went, and broke the legs of the two thieves to diſpatch them. When they came to Jeſus, and ſaw him already dead, they did not break his legs, and the words of Exodus ſaying, You ſhall not break a bone of him, were fulfilled. But one of the ſoldiers with the thruſt of a ſpear opened his ſide, from whence there iſſued out blood and water. Joſeph of Arimathea, a good and upright man, and a diſciple of Jeſus, went in boldly to Pilate and begged the body of Jeſus. Having obtained his requeſt, he repaired ſtreight to the mountain with Nicodemus, and took the body of their bleſſed Lord, which they wrapped in fine linen and perfumed with a precious mixture of myrrh and aloes according to the cuſtom of the Jews. There was a garden nigh, and in that garden a new monument, proper for the interment of the dead, in which no body had been yet buried. Thither they carried the ſacred Body of our Lord, there they decently laid it, and rolled a huge ſtone againſt the mouth of the ſepulchre.

Saint Chryſoſtom is charmed with the courage of Joſeph and Nicodemus, who publicly declared themſelves on this ſolemn occaſion to be the diſciples of Chriſt, which

which their fears had hitherto hindered them from doing. They ſet their fears aſide; they forgot all human reſpects, when piety to their deceaſed Lord called for their ſervice. They loſt no time, they ſpared no coſt, they carried their precious ſpices in profuſion: happy was their lot in having the Body of their dear Redeemer for the object of their charity. From the example of theſe holy diſciples St. Chryſoſtom exhorts his people to a practice of the like virtues; he tells them to provide perfumes for the body of Jeſus Chriſt. For our poor and virtuous brethren, ſays he, are the living members of Chriſt: we piouſly and meritoriouſly pour out the odours of charity upon them, as often as we compaſſionate them in their ſufferings and relieve them in their wants. Some one or other of them daily ſtands in need of our help, and may be comforted by us: what we do to the leaſt of them, we do to Jeſus Chriſt himſelf.

§ LX. *Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt. Mat.* 28.

THE Scribes and Phariſees were not ſatisfied, tho' they ſaw Jeſus in the grave. They remembered what he had ſaid about his riſing again upon the third day, and altho' they did not believe the prediction themſelves, yet they were afraid it might make ſome impreſſion upon others. They pretended to ſuſpect ſome deſign in the diſciples of ſtealing away their Maſter's body, and of ſpreading a report of his being riſen from the dead. Therefore they deſired Pilate that he would order a guard round the ſepulchre, to prevent any one's coming near it for three days. You have a guard, ſaid Pilate, go and diſpoſe of them, as you ſhall judge fit. They went immediately, and made the ſepulchre ſure, by ſetting a ſeal upon the ſtone, and placing the ſoldiers round. They fancied, that by thoſe precautions they ſhould deſtroy the notion of Chriſt's reſurrection, and by thoſe precautions they eſtabliſhed its belief beyond the poſſibility of a doubt. Early in the morning *A. D.* 34.

morning of the third day there was a great earthquake; for an Angel of the Lord deſcended from heaven, rolled back the ſtone, and ſeated himſelf upon it. His countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as ſnow. The guards were ſtruck with terror, and became as dead men. But upon recollecting themſelves, ſome of them went into the city and related to the chief prieſts what they had ſeen. The prieſts were alarmed at the report, aſſembled the Council, and conſulted together what to do. They agreed to ſtop the ſoldiers mouths with money, if they could, and to bribe them to ſay, that during the night they had fallen aſleep, and Jeſus's diſciples came in the interim and ſtole away his body. The ſoldiers took the money, and conformably to their inſtructions publiſhed the fictitious ſtory, which was induſtriouſly ſpread amongſt the people. Mary Magdalene and ſome other holy women, whoſe piety was never weary in the ſervice of Jeſus Chriſt, went betimes in the morning to perfume the dead Body of our Lord. They aſked one another, before they came to the place, how they ſhould be able to roll away the ſtone from the entrance of the monument; for the ſtone was very great: but at their approach they perceived the ſtone was rolled back and the entrance open. They ſaw an Angel in the ſhape of a young man clothed in white, who thus accoſted them: Fear not, I know you ſeek Jeſus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is riſen, as he ſaid, he is not here, behold the place where he lay: go quickly and tell his diſciples, that he is riſen, and will go before them into Galilee, where they ſhall ſee him. The women immediately haſtened to perform their commiſſion, and upon their report Saint Peter and Saint John repaired to the monument: Mary Magdalene went alſo back with them. They entered the Monument, ſaw the linen cloths lying, and the handkerchief, which had been about his head, wrapped up apart, but being able to diſcover nothing more, departed again to their home. For they were not yet ſufficiently enlightened to underſtand the Scriptures concerning the reſurrection. Mary Magdalene remained, after they were gone,

gone, ſtanding and weeping at the mouth of the ſepulchre. Eager to find whom ſhe loved, ſhe ſtooped down, and looking into the tomb perceived two angels in white apparel, ſitting one at the head and the other at the feet, where the ſacred Body had lain. They aſked her, why ſhe wept? Becauſe they have taken away my Lord, ſaid ſhe, and I know not where they have laid him. She turned herſelf back, and ſeeing a man there ſtanding unknown to her, took him for the gardener, and ſaid; Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me, where you have laid him. Jeſus ſaid, Mary! Mary knew him at the word, and in an ecſtacy of joy turning round anſwered him, Rabboni, which is to ſay, Maſter. Do not touch me, ſaid Jeſus to her, for I am not yet aſcended to my Father; but go, tell my brethren, that I aſcend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

The love and perſeverence, which the pious Magdalene expreſſed in ſeeking her Redeemer, made her worthy to find him. The myſtery of a reſurrection ſo glorious to Jeſus Chriſt, and ſo intereſting to us is the confirmation of our faith, and the foundation of our hope. Jeſus Chriſt died for our Redemption, and is again riſen for our juſtification. By this we know, that if we ſuffer with Jeſus, with Jeſus we ſhall alſo riſe. The certain hope of a reſurrection from the grave to a ſtate of immortality is the Chriſtian's comfort in affliction, and his encouragement in hardſhips. The light and paſſing tribulations of this world, if rightly borne, entail upon us an immenſe and eternal weight of glory in the next.

§ LXI. *Diſciples of Emaus. Luke* 24.

THE holy women, in obedience to the Angel's commands being on their way from the monument to the diſciples, were met by Jeſus, who ſaid to them, All hail. They went up, took hold of his feet, and adored him. He ſuffered them not to remain long there, but bade them go and deliver the meſſage *A. D.* 34.

meſſage they were carrying to his brethren. Two of the diſciples happened to be going on the ſame day to Emaus, a ſmall town between ſeven and eight miles diſtant from Jeruſalem. They talked over the late tranſactions in Jeruſalem, as they walked along, when our bleſſed Saviour in the form and habit of a traveller came up, and joined them. He did not let them know who he was, but, as any other traveller might have done, deſired them to tell him the ſubject of their diſcourſe and why they looked ſo ſorrowful. To which one of them, whoſe name was Cleophas, made anſwer, Is it poſſible you ſhould be the only ſtranger in Jeruſalem not to know, what has happened there within theſe few days? He aſked them, what? And they replied concerning Jeſus of Nazareth. He was a great Prophet, ſaid they, both in word and work, and we hoped he would have redeemed Iſrael. But our chief prieſts and princes cauſed him to be apprehended, condemned and executed upon a diſgraceful croſs. This is the third day ſince his death, and we are at a loſs to know, what we are to expect or hope for. Some women of ours have been this morning to viſit his tomb, and have alarmed us with their accounts. They could not find the body, but ſaw an apparition of Angels, who informed them, that Jeſus was not to be ſought amongſt the dead, that he was not there, that he had riſen, and was alive again. Upon this information, ſome of our brethren alſo haſtened to the ſepulchre, and found every thing, as the women had related. O fooliſh and ſenſeleſs men! exclaimed our Saviour, how dull are you in your underſtanding, and how ſlow in your belief! According to the Prophets was it not neceſſary, that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer all theſe things, and ſo enter into his glory? He then quoted to them the different paſſages of holy writ, which Moyſes and the Prophets had ſpoken of him, and which he graciouſly interpreted to them. When they came near to Emaus, he made a ſhow, as if he had been going further on; they repreſented to him, that the day was too far ſpent for him to think of going any further that evening; they invited him to remain with them.

they

they preſſed and in the end prevailed. Jeſus therefore entered with them into a houſe, where being at ſupper he took bread, which he bleſſed, broke, and gave to them. By that action, which the holy Fathers think was a ſacramental communion, the eyes of the two diſciples were immediately opened; they ſaw and knew him, but enjoyed his company no longer, for he that moment vaniſhed from their ſight. They communicated their thoughts upon the matter to one another, and mentioned the glow, their hearts were in, while he explained the Scriptures to them; they wiſhed to impart the joyful tidings to their brethren, as ſoon as poſſible, and therefore ſet off that very hour back again to Jeruſalem, where they found the eleven Apoſtles, with ſome others aſſembled together, to whom they related what had paſſed in the way, and how they had known him in the breaking of bread.

From the circumſtances of this hiſtory we may gather, how agreeable to Chriſt are the converſations of his followers upon pious and religious ſubjects. No ſubject is ſo worthy of a Chriſtian's thoughts, as what God has done and ſuffered for us; and if we entertain a due ſenſe of our Redeemer's love, we ſhall not be backward to expreſs our gratitude; for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth ſpeaketh. The two diſciples diſcourſed, as they walked along, upon the paſſion and reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt. Drawn by their diſcourſe, Jeſus Chriſt joined their company, aſked them queſtions, that they might repeat what they had ſaid, expounded the Scriptures to them upon that ſubject, enlightened their minds with new rays of faith, and warmed their hearts with a glow of piety and holy love.

§ LXII.

§ LXII. *Chriſt's charge to Saint Peter. John 21.*

A. D. 34. ON the ſame day of his Reſurrection, when it was late, and the chamber doors were ſhut, where the Apoſtles kept together for fear of the Jews, Jeſus ſuddenly appeared ſtanding in the midſt of them, and ſaid, Peace be to you. Seeing them in a fright and troubled, as if they ſaw a ſpirit, he aſked them, why they were frightened, and why ſuch thoughts aroſe in their hearts? Behold my hands and feet, ſaid he; feel and ſee, that it is I: for a ſpirit hath not fleſh and bones, as you ſee me have. He therefore ſaid again, Peace be with you; as my Father ſent me, ſo do I alſo ſend you. After which he breathed upon them, and ſaid, Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt: whoſe ſins you ſhall forgive, they are forgiven; and whoſe ſins you ſhall retain, they are retained. At his laſt ſupper, four days before, he had given to his Apoſtles the power of conſecrating his Body and his Blood in the Sacrament of the holy Euchariſt; and here he gave them a power to forgive ſins in the ſacrament of penance, and thereby completed their ſacerdotal character. Thomas, one of the eleven, was abſent, when Jeſus came, and being afterwards told by the other diſciples, that they had ſeen the Lord, would not believe them; and unleſs I ſhall ſee in his hands the print of the nails, ſaid he, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and my hand into his ſide, I will not believe. After eight days Jeſus came again to his diſciples in the room, whilſt the doors were ſhut as before, and ſaluted them with a Peace be with you. Thomas was then preſent; and as if it had been ſolely on his account, that Jeſus came, he turned to him and ſaid, Put in thy finger hither, and ſee my hands; bring hither thy hand, and put it into my ſide; and be not incredulous, but faithful. Thomas immediately exclaimed, My Lord, and my God! To whom our bleſſed Saviour, Thou haſt believed, Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen; happy they, who have not ſeen, and yet believe.

Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt ſhowed himſelf for a third time to his Apoſtles, as they were fiſhing in the lake of Tiberias; and then it was, that he fulfilled the promiſe, which he had made to Saint Peter, *Mat.* xvi. of building his Church upon him, as upon a rock, againſt which no ſtorms of perſecution, and no powers of hell ever ſhould prevail. Simon Peter and Thomas, with the two ſons of Zebedee, and Nathanael, and two other diſciples, being fiſhing in the ſea of Galilee, Jeſus came and ſtood upon the ſhore, without being known by them. He called out, and bade them caſt their net on the right ſide of the ſhip, where they would catch plenty of fiſh, for they had yet taken none. They caſt their net, as he directed, and by the wonderful capture they made, Saint John knew it to be the Lord: upon which Saint Peter girted his coat round him, and plunging into the ſea, ſwam aſhore. The reſt came in the ſhip. As ſoon as they landed, they ſaw hot coals lying and a fiſh laid thereon, and bread. Jeſus invited them to come and dine: no one preſumed to aſk him, who he was, for they knew him to be the Lord. When they had dined, Jeſus ſaid to Simon Peter, Simon, ſon of [illegible], loveſt thou me more than theſe do? Yes, Lord, replied Peter, thou knoweſt I love thee. *Feed my lambs*, ſaid Jeſus, and aſked him again, Simon, ſon of John, loveſt thou me? Peter made the ſame anſwer as before, and Jeſus repeated to him the ſame charge to *feed his lambs*. He ſaid to him the third time, Simon, ſon of John, loveſt thou me? Peter, full of humility, and diffident of himſelf, was grieved to hear his maſter aſk a third time, whether he loved him, modeſtly replied, Lord thou knoweſt all things; thou knoweſt that I love thee. Jeſus then ſaid, *Feed my ſheep*.

To feed, in the ſtyle of holy Scripture, is to guide, rule, and govern, as Saint Ambroſe and others take notice, and to feed the lambs and the ſheep of Chriſt is undoubtedly to have the ſupreme ſpiritual power of governing and directing the whole flock of Chriſt in all matters belonging to faith. This is the charge, which our bleſ-

ſed Saviour thrice repeated to his Apoſtle, bidding him feed his Lambs and feed his Sheep; for this he changed his name into Peter, which ſignifies a rock, and for this he prayed, that his faith might never fail. Upon this ground the ſpiritual ſupremacy of Saint Peter and his ſucceſſors in the Pontifical chair, has in every age and in every country been reverenced and acknowledged by the holy Fathers, as their writings ſhow, namely, Tertullian, Saint Cyrian, Saint Leo, Saint Jerom, Saint Auſtin, Saint Chryſoſtom, and the firſt general councils, particularly that of Chalcedon.

§ LXIII. *Aſcenſion of our Lord. Acts* 1.

A. D. 34. OUR bleſſed Lord remained forty days upon earth after his reſurrection, appearing ſometimes to all his Apoſtles at once, and ſometimes only to ſome, that he might thereby fully convince them of his being riſen, and wean them by degrees from his corporeal preſence. During that time, he inſtructed them in the nature and the uſe of thoſe ſpiritual powers, which he had imparted to them for the good of mankind. What theſe inſtructions were in particular, the Evangeliſts do not particularly mention: Saint Luke in general terms ſays, that he ſpoke to them of the kingdom of God, which, according to Saint Gregory, is his Church upon earth. Saint Matthew and Saint Mark finiſh their Evangelical hiſtory with theſe remarkable words of our bleſſed Saviour to his Apoſtles, ſaying, To me is given all power in heaven and on earth; go ye therefore, teach all nations, baptiſing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt. He, who ſhall believe and be baptiſed, ſhall be ſaved; but he, who ſhall not believe, ſhall be condemned. Teach them therefore to obſerve every thing, that I have commanded you: for behold, I am always with you, even unto the end of the world.

Jeſus Chriſt had now finiſhed the work, for which he came down from heaven, and dwelt among us. He had enlightened

enlightened the world by his doctrine, and redeemed it by his death: by his miracles he had confirmed the truth of his revealed religion; he had eſtabliſhed his Church, which he commands all to hear; he had promiſed to aſſiſt his Church with the Spirit of truth to the end of ages; he had appointed his vicar, as an univerſal paſtor, to preſide over the Church in his name, and to feed his flock, both Sheep and Lambs, in his abſence; nothing more remained than to take poſſeſſion of that ſeat of bliſs, which he had merited for his own ſacred humanity and us. Therefore on the fortieth day after his reſurrection from the dead, he led his diſciples forth to the mountain of Olives, near Jeruſalem; he there gave them his laſt bleſſing, and raiſed himſelf from the earth towards heaven. They fixed their eyes upon him, as he aſcended thro' the air, till an intervening cloud received him from their ſight. By his own divine power he aſcended into heaven, where he ſits at the right hand of the Father; being, as he always was and ever will be, the ſame conſubſtantial and co-eternal God with Him and the Holy Ghoſt in one and the ſame divine nature. The Apoſtles kept their eyes ſtill fixed on heaven, when two young men in white apparel came and aſked them, why they ſtood thus gazing at the heavens? The Jeſus, whom you have ſeen taken from you into heaven, ſaid they, will in the ſame manner come again from thence to judge the living and the dead.

Trivial is the pomp of this vain world to a devout and fervent Chriſtian, when he contemplates the glory of Jeſus Chriſt, and conſiders the never-ending happineſs of the citizens in heaven. Heaven is the object, on which we ought to turn our eyes; thither ought our hearts and wiſhes to aſpire. We never ſhould forget, that the country, to which we belong, that the bread, which nouriſhes our ſouls, that the grace, which ſupports our virtue, that the happineſs, which we hope to partake of, and the Head, of which we are members, is in heaven. The ſpiritual treaſures, which we here enjoy, and the temporal advantages, which we receive from creatures, are appointed us by Almighty God, as helps towards our laſt

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end. It was to open us an entrance into heaven, that Chriſt ſhed his blood; it was to draw our hearts thither, that he is aſcended before the laſt day. The heavenly princes were commanded to liſt up their eternal gates, and the King of glory, the Lord of powers, entered into his kingdom, which he had acquired by his ſufferings and death.

§ LXIV. *Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt. Acts 2.*

A. D. 34. OUR bleſſed Saviour before his aſcenſion had commanded his Apoſtles not to ſtir from Jeruſalem, till they ſhould be indued with the virtue of the Holy Ghoſt, whom he promiſed to ſend them. In obedience to that order they returned from mount Olivet into the city, where they retired into an upper room, and perſevered unanimouſly in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jeſus. During that interval Saint Peter began to exerciſe the prerogative of his Apoſtolical ſupremacy: he informed his brethren, that according to the holy Scriptures they muſt fill up the place of Judas Iſcariot, who by his traiterous prevarication had fallen from the Apoſtleſhip, and muſt therefore chuſe ſome one of them, who had followed Jeſus from the time of his Baptiſm to the day of his Aſcenſion, and had been witneſs of his Reſurrection. Two were immediately nominated in preference to all others, Matthias, and Joſeph ſurnamed the juſt. To determine which of the two was to be preferred, they had recourſe to lots, devoutly praying to Almighty God, that he would be pleaſed to manifeſt his will to them. The lot fell upon Matthias, and he was conſequently aſſociated with the other eleven Apoſtles.

When the time of Pentecoſt, that is to ſay, the term of fifty days after Eaſter, was accompliſhed, a ſudden noiſe was heard as of a mighty wind ruſhing from the heavens, which filled the whole houſe, where the Apoſtles were aſſembled. Over the head of each one there appeared the form of a fiery tongue, and all of them were

were immediately repleniſhed with the Holy Ghoſt. From that moment they became endowed with the gift of tongues, and they ſpoke in different languages, as the Holy Ghoſt inſpired. The Apoſtles were no longer thoſe timid and puſillanimous men, who had hitherto trembled at every noiſe, and ſkulked from danger; they ruſhed into the ſtreets of Jeruſalem, and in defiance of their enemies preached the crucified Jeſus. As ſoon as it was noiſed abroad, the people ran in multitudes together, and were amazed to hear each one his own language ſpoken by Galileans. Jeruſalem at that time was crouded with Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven, who were come to celebrate the feaſt of Pentecoſt. Aſtoniſhed to hear the Apoſtles in various tongues ſpeaking the wonderful works of God, they aſked one another, what it meant, while others in deriſion ſaid, that they were full of new wine. Saint Peter roſe up with the Eleven to refute the calumny: in a pathetical diſcourſe he informed his hearers, that what they ſaw and wondered at, was not the effect of wine, but of that Holy Spirit, which God had promiſed by his prophet Joel to pour out upon his people. He expatiated upon the miracles, the death, and reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt in a language ſo inſpired and perſuaſive, that no leſs than three thouſand, upon conviction, embraced the true faith, and were baptiſed in the name of Jeſus Chriſt for the remiſſion of their ſins.

On that day of Pentecoſt, when the Law of Jeſus Chriſt took place of the Law of Moyſes, the Church, the new Jeruſalem, as Saint John ſpeaks in his Revelations, deſcended from heaven, like a bride decked out to meet the bridegroom, and Jeſus Chriſt, the eternal Prieſt according to the order of Melchiſedech, erected a new Temple to the honour of his Father. The myſtery of the death and reſurrection of a God-man was announced to the various inhabitants of the earth, who were then at Jeruſalem, that no nation under the ſun might be ignorant of it. On that day Jeſus Chriſt victoriouſly triumphed over thoſe, who had nailed him to the Croſs; he convinced them, that all their ſchemes againſt him had

had been vain, and were made to ſerve as means to accompliſh the deſigns of God. On that day he planted his Apoſtolic Church, as an everlaſting monument of his victory: to the lateſt poſterity that monument ſhall ſtand, and defy every effort, that either men or devils can raiſe againſt it. The Spirit of truth, if the promiſes of Chriſt are, as no one doubts, infallible, ſhall abide with the Church, and teach her all truth to the end of the world.

§ LXV. *Cure of the lame man. Acts* 3.

A. D. 34. THE multitude of believers in Jeruſalem became every day more and more numerous. Being as unanimous in charity as they were in their belief, they no longer retained any poſſeſſions, which were not devoted to the common ſervice of their brethren, ſo that they had no poor amongſt them. Addicted to prayer and the pious exerciſes of their religion, they were not ſwayed by paſſion, nor led aſtray by private views; their chief concern was to ſerve and honour God, they took their meat with gladneſs and ſimplicity of heart. The admirable holineſs of their lives, conjointly with the preaching and miracles of the Apoſtles, commanded reſpect from their fellow citizens. Of the many miracles, wrought by the Apoſtles in confirmation of their doctrine, that was the moſt memorable, which Saint Peter did in favour of a lame beggar. The holy Apoſtle went with Saint John at the ninth hour to perform his devotions in the Temple. They entered at the gate, which was called the Beautiful, where a cripple from his mother's womb lay unable to move without help. The poor man fixed his eyes upon the Apoſtles, as if he expected an alms. Saint Peter told him, that he was not poſſeſſed either of gold or ſilver, but that he would give him what he had, and forthwith commanded him in the name of Jeſus Chriſt to riſe and walk, taking hold of his right hand at the ſame time, and liſting him up. The man that inſtant leaped upon his feet, ſtood firm upon his legs, and walked joyfully with the Apoſtles

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into the Temple, giving thanks to God for the favour he had received by their means. Struck with wonder and amazement to ſee the man ſo inſtantaneouſly cured, the people caſt their eyes upon the two Apoſtles, which Saint Peter obſerving ſaid, Ye men of Iſrael, why do you wonder, and why do you look at us, as if by our own power we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, of Iſaac, and of Jacob, has glorified his Son Jeſus, whom the Prophets foretold, whom the God of our Fathers ſent amongſt you for your ſalvation, but whom you and your rulers accuſed before Pilate, and crucified. But I know, brethren, that you did it thro' ignorance, or the author of life you never would have put to death. Repent therefore and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out. While he was thus ſpeaking to the people, the Prieſts, with the Sadducees and officers of the Temple, came up, and being exaſperated at the ſubject of his diſcourſe, commanded ſilence, and took both him and Saint John into cuſtody. The great council of the Jews next morning ordered the two Apoſtles to be brought before them. Upon their appearance they aſked them, by what power, and in whoſe name, they ſpoke and acted as they did? Saint Peter anſwered, In the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: for there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we can be ſaved. He it is, whom you crucified, whom God hath raiſed from the dead, and by whom this man hath recovered the uſe of his limbs. The man was preſent; every one ſaw him ſtanding upright upon his feet; his cure was a fact not to be denied. They ordered the Apoſtles to withdraw, and began to confer amongſt themſelves, how they were to act in this caſe. They could not diſpute the miracle, and to puniſh the Apoſtles for having relieved a poor cripple might cauſe a tumult among the people; they therefore agreed to exert their endeavours in ſuppreſſing the report, and to have nothing more ſaid either of Jeſus or of the miracle. Upon this concluſion they called in the Apoſtles, whom they thought to terrify by menaces, and to ſilence by authority,

authority, bade them be gone, and be careful for the future not to ſpeak nor teach in the name of Jeſus. The Apoſtles were not to be intimidated by ſuch threats. We leave you to judge, ſaid they in reply, whether it be right to hear you rather than God. We cannot but ſpeak the things, which we have ſeen and heard. This anſwer of the Apoſtles deſerves to be well conſidered by every Chriſtian; the maxim is indiſpenſable in thoſe circumſtances, where God commands one thing and man another: it never can be juſtifiable to obey men preferably to God.

§ LXVI. *Ananias and Saphira. Acts 5.*

A. D. 34. SAINT Peter and Saint John, being acquitted by the Jewiſh council, went to find out their friends, whom they knew to be in great concern about them. They related, how the whole affair had been conducted, and how it ended. The brethren with one accord lifted up their voice to God in thankſgiving, and devoutly prayed, that he would continue to protect his ſervants, and inſpire them with confidence to reſiſt the impious, who had combined againſt the Lord, and againſt his Chriſt. When they had finiſhed their prayer, the place ſhook, wherein they were aſſembled; they felt the invigorating effects of the Holy Ghoſt, they were filled with new courage, and they preached the word of God with confidence. The multitude of believers had but one heart and one ſoul. No one had any thing belonging to him, which was not at the ſervice of the community, and they, who ſold their lands or houſes, brought the money and laid it at the Apoſtles feet, to be diſtributed, as the wants of particulars ſhould require. Charmed by the example of ſuch virtues, and ſtruck by the miracles of the Apoſtles, great numbers flocked to the ſtandard of Jeſus Chriſt. Saint Peter is celebrated by the inſpired writer as the chief and moſt active inſtrument in God's hand for theſe great achievements; his power of curing the ſick ſeems to have had

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no bounds. The inhabitants of the country and cities round about brought forth their ſick into the ſtreets, and laid them on beds and couches, that the ſhadow at leaſt of that illuſtrious Apoſtle might reach them, as he paſſed along, and heal their infirmities.

While the Church thus ſmiled with ſucceſs, and the joy of the Holy Ghoſt was diffuſed thro' the hearts of the faithful, a melancholy diſaſter alarmed them with the terror of God's rigorous judgments. A certain man, named Ananias, with his wife Saphira, had ſold a field, and, brought to the Apoſtles a part only of the money, which they had received for it, and laid it at Saint Peter's feet, as if it had been the whole ſum. The inſpired Apoſtle knew the fraud, which the unhappy man had committed, and thus upbraided him for it; Why, Ananias, haſt thou yielded to the temptation of Satan? Why haſt thou lied to the Holy Ghoſt, and fraudulently retained a part of the price, for which thou haſt ſold thy land? Wert thou not at liberty to ſell, or not to ſell thy field, as thou ſhouldſt think fit? It was thy own. And after thou hadſt ſold it, was it not in thy power to make thy promiſe or not? Why haſt thou prevaricated in thy heart? Thou haſt not lied to men, but to God. Thunder-ſtruck at theſe words, Ananias fell down, and gave up the ghoſt. The young men, who were preſent, immediately roſe up, and carried him out to be buried. About three hours after in came Saphira, having no ſuſpicion of her huſband's death. Tell me, woman, ſaid Saint Peter to her, whether you ſold the land for ſo much? And ſhe anſwering, Yes; he ſeverely rebuked her for the wicked agreement, ſhe had made with her huſband, and denounced the vengeance of God againſt her for having tempted him. Behold, the men, ſaid he, who have carried off thy dead huſband to the grave, are at the door, and they ſhall carry thee out in the ſame manner. She that inſtant fell down before his feet, and expired. The young men coming in and finding her dead, carried away the body, and buried it beſide her huſband.

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The ſudden death of theſe two unhappy Chriſtians is a manifeſt proof of the guilt, which is contained in a breach of promiſe made to God. God declares, that he hates rapine in an holocauſt, and tells us to be faithful in rendering to him the vow we have made. The ſevere judgment, which befel Ananias and Saphira, ſays Saint Auſtin, ought to caution Chriſtians againſt all ſuch fraudulent proceedings, as are inconſiſtent with the truth and ſimplicity of the Goſpel. He calls their action a ſacrilegious fraud, and Saint Chryſoſtom ſays, it was a theft of what was conſecrated to God. It matters not by whom the thing was given, whether by themſelves or by any other; the moment it was appropriated to the divine ſervice, it belonged to God, and no one after that could preſume to deſtroy or take it to himſelf without ſacrilege.

§ LXVII. *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen. Acts 7.*

A. D. 34. OF all the Jewiſh ſectaries, that oppoſed the progreſs of the Goſpel, the Sadducees were the moſt violent. Stung with envy to ſee the people ſo eager in embracing a new doctrine, they cauſed the Apoſtles to be apprehended, and caſt into the common priſon. In the night an Angel of the Lord opening the doors led them out, and bade them preach next day to the people in the Temple. The Jewiſh elders met in the morning, and ſent their miniſters with orders to bring the Apoſtles before them. The miniſters repaired to the priſon, and unbarred the doors, but found no priſoners within: they went back, and related how they had found the guard upon duty, the priſon well ſecured, and the priſoners gone. The Elders were thrown into the greateſt confuſion at this report, and knew not what meaſures to take, when a perſon came to inform them, that the men, whom they had put in priſon, were then actually preaching in the Temple. An officer was diſpatched to ſummon them. The Apoſtles, ready to obey every order of the magiſtrate, that

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was conſiſtent with their duty to God, followed the officer into the council. The High-prieſt reproached them with diſobedience to the former orders, which had been given them, not to mention the name of Jeſus among the people, nor to diſturb the public peace with any new doctrines. Saint Peter anſwered in the ſame words as before, That God was to be obeyed preferably to men. The anſwer threw the council into a violent ferment; they ſwelled with rage, they ſtormed and threatened the Apoſtles with inſtant death, when Gamaliel, a wiſe and prudent Phariſee, roſe up to make them hear reaſon, and to calm their paſſions. With a ſoft and ſoothing eloquence he diſſuaded them from acts of violence, and convinced them, that they had no other meaſure to take than that of moderation; that if this new doctrine was the invention of men, it would of itſelf ſoon fall to nought; but if it ſprung from God, that it would be raſhneſs in them to oppoſe it. They agreed to follow his advice, and to diſmiſs the Apoſtles after having ſcourged and ſtrictly charged them never to ſpeak again in the name of Jeſus. The Apoſtles went from the preſence of the council rejoicing, becauſe they had been accounted worthy to ſuffer reproach for the name of Jeſus. Their zeal was not dampt by ſuffering, they preached daily in the Temple, and from houſe to houſe ceaſed not to teach the faith and doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt.

Soon after this ſome diſcontentedneſs aroſe amongſt the faithful themſelves. The Jewiſh converts, who were from Greece, murmured againſt thoſe of Judea, and complained even to the Apoſtles, that their widows were neglected. The Apoſtles bade them chuſe out ſeven diſcreet and virtuous men, who ſhould take upon them the management of thoſe things, which they in the daily miniſtry of the word could not attend to. By common conſent ſeven men were accordingly choſen; the Apoſtles laid their hands upon them, and ordained them deacons. The moſt eminent of theſe ſeven was Stephen, who to a natural greatneſs of ſoul united an ardent zeal for the cauſe of God. Full of the Holy Ghoſt, he exerted the force of that ſacred eloquence, which diſtinguiſhed him above the reſt,

reſt, in inſtructing the people in the knowledge of ſalvation. His enemies ſtrained every nerve to ſilence him, but were not able to reſiſt the wiſdom and the Spirit, that ſpoke by his tongue. They had recourſe to violence: they ſuborned falſe witneſſes to ſay, that he ceaſed not to ſpeak againſt the Temple and the Law, that he had blaſphemed againſt God and Moyſes. He was ſummoned to appear before the council, and anſwer to the charge, which was brought againſt him. Stephen ſtood in the midſt of the aſſembly; they all fixed their eyes upon him; for there was ſomething ſo charming in his looks, that his face ſeemed as if it were the face of an Angel. Being queſtioned by the High-prieſt, he entered into a ſhort detail of the ſacred hiſtory from Abraham down to that time: he upbraided them for their incredulity and obſtinacy in reſiſting the Holy Spirit, and concluded by telling them, that like to their hardened forefathers, who had perſecuted the Prophets, they had made themſelves the betrayers and murderers of the Juſt One, whoſe coming the Prophets had foretold. His words cut them to the very heart; they gnaſhed their teeth at him thro' anger and deſire of revenge. The holy Levite ſtood for ſome time ſilent, looking up ſtedfaſtly to heaven, and at laſt exclaimed, Behold! I ſee the heavens opened, and the Son of man ſtanding on the right hand of God! Then the Jews, as tho' he had uttered blaſphemy, ſtopped their ears, and ruſhing furiouſly upon him, hurried him out of the city to a place, where they ſtoned him to death. A young man, called Saul, kept the garments of thoſe, who ſtoned him. Stephen fell upon his knees, and whilſt his enemies hurled their ſtones at him, moſt earneſtly called upon Jeſus not to lay the ſin to their charge; and when he had ended his prayer, he ſlept happily in the Lord.

Saint Stephen is the firſt of thoſe innumerable martyrs, who have ſince ſhed their blood for Jeſus Chriſt. The charity, he expreſſed for his executioners in the very act of his martyrdom, ſhows him to have been the true diſciple of his divine maſter. He had reprimanded his enemies with ſome degree of ſeverity, but that ſeverity was

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inſpired by the love he bore them. He reproached their incredulity with zeal, but without bitterneſs. He was a dove, ſays Saint Auſtin, whoſe anger had no gall. If he was ſtrong in his expreſſions, it was to break the hardneſs of their hearts. At the ſame time that he glowed with zeal for their ſalvation, he offered up his blood to God for thoſe, who ſpilt it.

§ LXVIII. *Samaritans baptiſed and confirmed. Acts* 8.

UPON the death of Saint Stephen a grievous perſecution commenced againſt the Church at Jeruſalem. Saul, an active zealot, diſtinguiſhed himſelf by his violences, entering into the houſes of the faithful, and dragging away men and women into priſon. A general conſternation prevailed amongſt the miniſters of God's word, all except the Apoſtles fled from the ſtorm, and diſperſed themſelves thro' the country of Judea and Samaria. The diſperſion of the faithful contributed to the propagation of the Goſpel; for they preached the word of God, where ever they went; and then it was, that the town of Samaria became acquainted with the name of Chriſt by the miniſtry of Philip one of the ſeven deacons. This holy man accompanied his preaching with many miracles; the Samaritans ran in crouds to hear him; they believed and were baptiſed. Amongſt the number there was one Simon, a noted magician, who by his ſorceries had long impoſed upon the people; this man, after he had received baptiſm, attached himſelf particularly to Philip. The Apoſtles, being informed that the Samaritans had received the word of God, judged it neceſſary to provide them immediately with thoſe ſpiritual helps, which Jeſus Chriſt had appointed to confirm the faith of his followers againſt the terrors of perſecution. Saint Peter and Saint John were deputed to go to Samaria for that purpoſe: when the two Apoſtles came thither, they prayed for the new converts, that they might receive the Holy Ghoſt, and no ſooner did they lay their hands upon them, than *A. D.* 34.

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they accordingly received the Holy Ghoſt. Simon obſerving the viſible effects, which enſued from that myſterious impoſition of hands, was carried away by a wicked deſire of performing the like wonder, and therefore offered money to the Apoſtles, if they would grant him the power of conferring the holy Ghoſt in the ſame manner. Keep thy money to thyſelf, ſaid Saint Peter, and let it periſh with thee, ſince thou haſt wickedly thought that the gift of God may be purchaſed with ſilver. Guilty of the ſame crime, and liable to the ſame curſe are alſo they, who, like Simon, ſhall preſume at any time to barter ſpiritual things for temporal.

The Apoſtles returned to Jeruſalem, and Saint Philip was admoniſhed by an Angel to go towards the great road, which led from Jeruſalem to Gaza. When he came thither, he ſaw a chariot going on, and in it a Eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of Ethiopia. This man had been to pay his homage to God in the Temple of Jeruſalem, and was upon his return home: he had the Scripture open before him, and ſat reading the prophecy of Iſaiah. Philip was inſpired to go up to him, and as he approached, diſtinctly heard what the Eunuch read, for he read aloud. Do you think, you underſtand what you read, ſaid Philip to him? And how ſhould I, replied, the Eunuch, unleſs I had ſome one to explain it to me? Come into the chariot and ſit by me. The paſſage of the prophecy, which he was reading, was this: *Like a ſheep was he led to ſlaughter, and as a mute lamb under the hands of his ſheerer, he opened not his mouth.* Is it of himſelf, or of another, that the Prophet here ſpeaks, ſaid the Eunuch? Philip then began, and inſtructed him in the belief and doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt. The Eunuch liſtened with attention, loſt not a ſingle word, that was ſpoken to him, and being thoroughly perſuaded of the truths he heard, aſked, when they came to a certain water, what hindered him from being baptiſed? Nothing, anſwered Philip, if you only believe. I do, replied the Eunuch; I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God: then commanding the chariot to ſtand ſtill, and going down with Philip into the water, he

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was baptiſed. As ſoon as the ceremony was over, the Spirit of the Lord miraculouſly took away Philip, and the Eunuch ſaw him no more. Happy in himſelf and thankful for the grace, which God had conferred upon him in ſo wonderful a manner, he chearfully purſued his journey to Ethiopia; and Philip continued preaching the Goſpel thro' all the cities from Azotus, till he came to Cæſarea.

§ LXIX. *Converſion of Saul. Acts* 9.

THE powerful effect of Saint Stephen's prayer for his perſecutors appears in the converſion of Saul. Saul was a native of Tarſus in Cilicia, warm and violent in his temper, and as he ſays of himſelf, a moſt zealous ſtickler for the traditions of his forefathers. He had ſignalized himſelf, as we have ſeen, in the perſecution at Jeruſalem, and from that time breathed nothing but blood and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples of our Lord. Not ſatisfied with what he had already done againſt them, he applied to the High-prieſt for credentials, which he eaſily obtained, and ſet out with full powers to Damaſcus to ſeize all, he ſhould find there of that perſuaſion and to bring them bound in chains to Jeruſalem. When he came near to the town of Damaſcus, he was ſuddenly ſurrounded by a ſtrong light from heaven much brighter than the ſun, and falling on the ground, heard a voice ſpeaking to him in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why doeſt thou perſecute me? Lord, who art thou, replied Saul? I am Jeſus, whom thou perſecuteſt, ſaid he. Saul then trembling and aſtoniſhed, cried out; Lord, what wilt thou have me do? Riſe up, ſaid Jeſus, go into the city, and there it ſhall be told thee, what thou muſt do. The men, who accompanied him, ſtood amazed; for tho' they ſaw no one, they nevertheleſs heard the voice. Saul aroſe from the ground, and found, tho' his eyes were open, that he could not ſee. His attendants took him by the hand, and conducted

A. D. 34.

conducted him to Damaſcus, where he remained blind for three days, without eating or drinking the whole time. There was at Damaſcus a certain diſciple, named Ananias, whom our Lord in a viſion ordered to go into the ſtreet, which was called Streight, and to enquire at the houſe of Judas for one Saul of Tarſus. Ananias was ſtartled at the order, and repreſented to the Lord, what a violent man this Saul was, what cruelties he had committed againſt the Saints in Jeruſalem, and with what powers he was now come to Damaſcus. Nevertheleſs go thy way, ſaid our Lord, for this man is to me a veſſel of election, deſtined to carry my name before the Gentiles, and kings and the children of Iſrael. Ananias went to the place appointed, and being introduced to the man he aſked for, thus ſaid; Brother Saul, the Lord Jeſus, who appeared to thee in the way, as thou cameſt, hath ſent me hither, that thou mayeſt receive thy ſight, and be filled with the Holy Ghoſt: he at the ſame time laid his hands upon Saul, and immediately there fell from his eyes ſomething like ſcales. Saul at the moment recovered his ſight, and riſing up was baptiſed. He remained for ſome days with the diſciples at Damaſcus, appearing at times in the Jewiſh ſynagogue, and publicly declaring Jeſus to be Chriſt the Son of God. All, who ſaw him, ſtood aſtoniſhed at the change, and wondered to hear the man ſpeak ſo ſtrenuouſly in ſupport of the doctrine, which they knew he came to perſecute.

Saint Paul, according to the account he gives of himſelf to the Galatians, remained not long at Damaſcus, before he retired into Arabia. In that retirement he ſpent near three years, without any communication with the Jews, till he came back to Damaſcus. After his return he began to preach the faith of Chriſt, and addreſſed his diſcourſes chiefly to the Jews, who not being able to withſtand his arguments, and yet not willing to embrace his doctrine, ſought to take away his life. Tho' he would have been happy to ſeal the truth by the effuſion of his blood, yet in hopes of reſerving himſelf for ſome greater good, by labouring for the ſalvation of

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others, he permitted his friends to let him down the wall in a baſket by night, and ſo eſcaped out of the hands of his enemies. He went ſtreight to Jeruſalem, where he was only known for his former violences. The faithful had received no certain account of his converſion, and were afraid of coming near him, till Barnabas introduced him to the Apoſtles Saint Peter and Saint James. As ſoon as the hiſtory of his converſion was known, he was received with open arms, and admitted amongſt the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt. His ſtay at Jeruſalem was no longer than fifteen days; for his great zeal would not ſuffer him to remain either ſilent or inactive. He drew upon himſelf a perſecution, which muſt have ended in his death, if the brethren had not prevented it by ſending him away to Cæſarea and Tarſus.

The converſion of Saul was once the joy of the Church, and is ſtill its conſolation. The riches of the divine mercy are not limited: they are ſometimes poured out upon the hearts even of the moſt obdurate. From being a violent perſecutor of Chriſt's Church, Saul became her zealous defender, and ſucceſsful propagator of her doctrine. The moſt habituated ſinner, as long as life remains, is never to deſpair. The Almighty has his moments and his times of grace; he may ſtrike and humble the ſinner to the very earth; and happy will the ſinner be, if in the Spirit of Saint Paul, he as promptly anſwers, Lord, what wilt thou have me do?

§ LXX. *Cornelius baptiſed. Acts* 10.

WHILE Saul was preparing himſelf for the Apoſtleſhip of the Gentiles, Saint Peter wrought great wonders, and made many converſions amongſt the Jews. The Church was reſtored to peace; the faithful in Judea, Galilee and Samaria practiſed the moſt perfect virtues, and enjoyed the conſolation of the Holy Ghoſt. Saint Peter made his Apoſtolical excurſions thro' the country, viſiting and confirming, *A. D.* 39.

confirming his little flock by word and work. At Lydda he healed Eneas, who for eight years had been confined to his bed by a palsy, and at Joppe he raised to life a woman, called Tabitha, who was remarkable for her alms to the poor. During his stay at Joppe, he was called by divine appointment to communicate the faith also to the Gentiles in the person of Cornelius, a Centurion in the Italian cohort. This man is much commended by the sacred historian for the regularity of his family, for his piety to God, and his alms deeds to the poor. Being at Cæsarea he was favoured one day with the apparition of an Angel, who told him, that God had heard his prayers, and accepted his alms; but that he must send men to Joppe, and call to him one Simon, who was surnamed Peter, and lodged in the house of Simon a tanner by the sea side, by whom he would be informed, what was moreover required of him. Almighty God might as easily have commissioned the Angel to instruct Cornelius, as to bid him send for Saint Peter. But it is his divine will, that a due respect be paid to those powers, which he has established upon earth, and in seeking the instruction we stand in need of, he expects we should submit to ask it of those, whom in his wisdom he has commanded us to hear. When the Angel was departed, Cornelius called two of his servants, to whom he related the vision, and sent them to Joppe. They reached the town next day about noon. St. Peter at that very time was gone into an upper room of the house, where he lodged, and being at his prayers, fell into an ecstacy of mind. He saw the heavens opened, and from thence a sort of vessel descending, like a great sheet, let down by the four corners, in which there was a variety of living creatures, of fowls, reptiles, and four-footed beasts. He heard at the same time a voice, telling him to kill and eat. Far be it from me, replied the Saint, to eat of any thing, that is unclean: to whom the voice; Call not that unclean, which God hath purified. This was repeated to him three times over, and presently the vessel was taken up into heaven. Now whilst Peter was doubting within himself, what could be

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the meaning of this myſterious viſion, the Centurion's ſervants came to the houſe, and enquired for him. The Spirit of God bade him go down to them, telling him, they came by his orders. The Apoſtle therefore went down to the men, and aſked them, what they came for. They made anſwer, that Cornelius a Centurion, a juſt and virtuous man, being warned by an Angel, had ſent them to deſire he would return with them to their maſter's houſe in Cæſarea. Saint Peter detained the men that night, and ſet off with them next morning in company of ſome of the brethren from Joppe. Cornelius in the interim had aſſembled his friends and acquaintance, waiting with impatience the Apoſtle's arrival, and no ſooner was he told of his being come, than he went out to meet and ſalute him, which he did with profound reſpect according to the Eaſtern cuſtom, and bowed himſelf down to his feet. The humble Apoſtle was diſturbed at the extraordinary reſpect which the Centurion paid him, and putting out his hand to help him up, ſaid, I am but a man, undeſerving of ſo much honour. He entered with him into the houſe, and ſeeing the many Gentiles, who were there aſſembled, began to tell them, how great an averſion a Jew had to viſit or converſe with Gentiles, but that God by a ſpecial viſion had ſignified to him not to call any man unclean; that he had therefore obeyed their meſſage, and deſired to hear for what reaſon they had ſent for him. The Centurion then related his viſion at full length, and concluded by ſaying, that all there preſent were ready to receive whatever commands the Lord ſhould communicate to them by his mouth. Saint Peter anſwered, that God was not a reſpecter of perſons; that of whatſoever nation men might be by deſcent or birth, he excepted none from his mercy, as long as by faith and good works they ſincerely ſought to pleaſe him. After that he explained the doctrine, the life, the death and reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, of whom the Prophets had given teſtimony, in whom alone there was remiſſion of ſins, and whom the Father had appointed to be judge of the living and the dead. While he was thus ſpeaking, the Holy Ghoſt deſcended upon all thoſe, who

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heard him; they were preſently endowed with the gift of tongues, and began to glorify God, which determined the Apoſtle to baptiſe them upon the ſpot. Saint Peter after ſome days ſtay at Cæſarea, went to Jeruſalem, where he found himſelf much cenſured by the Jewiſh converts for his communication with the uncircumciſed Gentiles. The humble Apoſtle did not pretend to ſilence them by authority, he ſaw their complaints aroſe from prejudice, and ſought to ſet them right by explaining the matter to them. He diſdained not, ſays Saint Gregory, to enter into the juſtification of his own conduct before his inferiors, and related to them his own and the Centurion's viſion. In confirmation of the fact, he referred them to the Jewiſh witneſſes, whom he had taken with him from Joppe, and concluded, that it did not behove him to withſtand God, and refuſe baptiſm to thoſe, who had received the Holy Ghoſt, as well as they.

§ LXXI. *Saint Peter delivered out of priſon. Acts.* 12.

A. D. 41. THE favourable account, which Saint Peter gave of his excurſion to Cæſaria, immediately ſilenced the objections of thoſe, who had been ready to find fault: the faithful were happy to ſee the Gentiles thus called to partake with them in the grace of eternal life, and exceedingly rejoiced, when they were likewiſe informed of the great numbers, who had embraced the faith at Antioch. Barnabas, a good man, as the Scripture witneſſes, full of faith and the Holy Ghoſt, was ſent thither to promote the work, which the grace of God had ſo happily begun. Upon his arrival he could not but rejoice at the pleaſing proſpect of religion; an extenſive field was opened to his zeal; the harveſt of ſouls was very great, the workmen few. He encouraged them to perſevere in the happy courſe, they had undertaken, and went to Tarſus in queſt of Saul. He found him and brought him back to Antioch, where they employed themſelves for a whole

year

year in the ſervice of the Lord: they preached, they inſtructed, they laboured with unwearied zeal, and had the conſolation to ſee their labours crowned with ſucceſs. The proſelytes, they made, were very numerous, and each one vied with his neighbour, in the ſtudy of good works; then and there it was, that the followers of Chriſt's doctrine were firſt diſtinguiſhed by the name of Chriſtians. About the ſame time there came prophets thither from Jeruſalem, and amongſt them one, called Agabus, who foretold a great famine. The Chriſtians were alarmed at the prophecy, and began to provide againſt the time of diſtreſs, which happened under Claudius. They collected conſiderable ſums, which they put into the hands of Saul and Barnabas for the relief of their brethren dwelling in Judea. The Church of Jeruſalem was at that time ſorely aggrieved by a perſecution, which Herod at the inſtigation of the Jews, had commenced againſt the faithful: the wicked king had already ſlain Saint James the brother of Saint John, and was then meditating the death of Saint Peter. Having cauſed him to be apprehended during the Eaſter time, he kept him in priſon under a ſtrong guard, till the holy-days were over, when he intended to bring him forth to the people. The faithful were in the deepeſt conſternation at the diſaſtrous event, rightly judging that the welfare of the flock was cloſely connected with that of the Paſtor, and therefore day and night did they ſend up their moſt fervent prayers to heaven for his deliverance. The Almighty graciouſly heard their petition, and delivered his Apoſtle on the very night, that preceded his intended execution. Bound with two chains, Saint Peter lay aſleep between two ſoldiers in the priſon, perfectly reſigned within himſelf, either to life or death, when an Angel of the Lord came with great brightneſs to the place, and ſtriking him on the ſide ſaid, Ariſe quickly. That moment the chains fell off from the Apoſtle's hands; he ſpeedily aroſe, put on his ſandals, threw his garment round him, and followed the Angel thro' the firſt and ſecond ward, till they came to the iron gate, which led to the city. At their approach the gate of itſelf

ſelf flew open, and they went on to the end of the ſtreet, where the Angel left him. The Saint then came to himſelf, for hitherto he ſeemed to have been in a dream, and ſaid, Now I know, that the Lord hath ſent his Angel, and delivered me from the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the Jews. Muſing on the event, he came to the houſe of Mary, the mother of Mark, and knocked at the gate. Many of the faithful were there met to pray: a girl, called Rhode, hearing ſome one knock, went to harken at the door, and immediately knew it to be Peter's voice; inſtead of letting him in, ſhe ran back in a tranſport of joy to acquaint the company, that Peter was at the gate. They told her, ſhe had loſt her ſenſes; but ſhe poſitively aſſured them, that ſo it was: ſtill they would not believe her, and ſaid, it was his Angel ſhe had heard. Peter in the mean while continued knocking: they then went to the door, and on opening it ſaw him, and were aſtoniſhed. He beckoned to them with his hand not to ſay a word, ſilently entered into the houſe, and gave them an account of what God had done for him. When he had finiſhed his narration, he deſired them to repeat it to James and the reſt of the brethren, and haſtened immediately out of the city, as privately as he could.

The wonderful releaſe of Saint Peter out of priſon has been thought to be of ſuch importance to the Church, that ſhe has inſtituted a day of thankſgiving to God on that account. She then experienced, as ſhe has often experienced ſince, that God is the ſovereign diſpoſer of all things here below; that he ſets what bounds, he pleaſes, to the power of tyrants, that he opens or ſhuts the priſons at his nod, & makes even the paſſions of men ſubſervient to his will in the execution of his unchangable decrees.

§ LXXII.

§ LXXII. *Labours of Saint Paul. Acts* 13, *&c.*

SAINT Luke makes little mention of Saint Peter after his miraculous deliverance out of prison, and fills up the remaining part of his history with the transactions chiefly of Saint Paul. This holy Apostle, soon after he had brought to Jerusalem the charitable collections made by the Christians of Antioch, was by a particular inspiration of the Holy Ghost ordained with Barnabas the Apostle of the Gentiles, which was done by fasting, and praying, and imposing hands upon them. Immediately after their ordination they directed their Apostolical course to the city of Seleucia, and from thence sailed into Cyprus, where they preached the word of God in the Jewish synagogues through the whole island, till they came to Paphos upon the coast. There they met with Sergius Paulus the Proconsul, a prudent man, who desired to hear them preach. Sergius was charmed with the doctrine, he heard, owned himself convinced, and would immediately have embraced the truth, had it not been for the dissuasions of a Jewish magician, whose name was Barjesu, or Elymas. The Apostle was grieved to see a bar put to the Gospel by a false prophet of his own nation: full of the Holy Ghost he arraigned the magician for his hypocrisy, and denounced the wrath of God upon him, telling him, he should become blind, nor see the sun for a time. The threat was no sooner spoke than executed: struck blind upon the spot, the impostor could no longer find his way about without some friendly hand to guide his steps. The Proconsul profited by the magician's misfortune, and, as he admired, so he readily believed and embraced the doctrine of Jesus Christ. From this date we find the Apostle of the Gentiles no longer called by the name of Saul, which from the Proconsul's surname, as it is supposed, was changed into Paul.

A. D. 44.

The two Apostles sailed from Cyprus to Perge in Pamphylia, and from thence went to Antioch in Pisidia.

Saint

Saint Paul, according to his cuſtom, entered the Jewiſh ſynagogue, and in a long diſcourſe eſtabliſhed the doctrine and divinity of Jeſus Chriſt. He was deſired by many of his audience, as they went out, to ſpeak again upon the ſame ſubject on the next Sabbath. The jealous rulers of the ſynagogue perceiving that he made many proſelytes, roſe up againſt him, and by the diſturbances they raiſed, drove him and Barnabas out of the country. The Apoſtles repaired to Iconium in Lycaonia, where they made many converts both of the Jews and Gentiles. But a perſecution being raiſed by the unbelieving Jews, they were ſoon after forced to fly to the cities of Derbe and Lyſtra. The miracle, which Saint Paul here wrought upon a man, who had been a cripple from his mother's womb, made the ſuperſtitious heathens believe, they were two deities in human ſhape, that had come amongſt them: they fancied Barnabas to be Jupiter, and Paul for his eloquence of ſpeech to be Mercury; the prieſt of Jupiter brought forth oxen and crowned them with garlands before the gates for ſacrifice in their honour. The Apoſtles ran in haſte to the deluded multitude, tore their garments and exerted their eloquence to convince them, that they were alſo mortal men like themſelves, and that not to them, but to the ſovereign Creator of the univerſe ſacrifice was only due. It was with great difficulty, that the people were prevailed upon to deſiſt. A few days after, ſo unconſtant are the honours beſtowed by an undiſcerning multitude, the Lyſtrians ſtarted into the oppoſite extreme. Excited by the ſlanders of certain Jews, who arrived from Iconium, they laid hands upon Saint Paul, dragged him out of the town, where they ſtoned and left him for dead. When the barbarians were gone, he roſe up, and entered into the city. Next morning he ſet off with Barnabas to Derbe, viſited the towns and provinces, thro' which they had already paſſed, preaching, confirming and ordaining Prieſts, where ever they went, and returned to Antioch in Syria. There they called the faithful together, to whom they related, what great things God had done by their hands, and what a door was opened for the

goſpel

gospel amongst the Gentiles. On that occasion a difficulty was started by some Jewish converts, who contended, that the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law ought to be observed by those, who were converted of the Gentiles. In a question of that nature, where men were strongly biassed by the prejudice of education, nothing could be decided by private authority. Saint Paul therefore and Barnabas were deputed to consult the Apostles & Priests of Jerusalem upon that subject. It was in the year fifty one. The Apostles and Bishops met in council; Saint Peter, as president over all the rest, opened the subject of debate. After a full discussion of the matter, a decision was formed in the name of the Holy Ghost and of all assembled, That the burden of the Mosaic Law was not to be imposed upon their believing brethren of the Gentiles. The decision was received at Antioch with great joy and respect.

Saint Paul remained some time at Antioch, when he invited Barnabas to accompany him in visiting the Churches, they had founded; but a dispute arising between them, whether John, surnamed Mark, should go with them or not, they separated, and Saint Paul chose Silas for his companion. He visited the cities of Syria and Cilicia, where he had already preached the word of God, and coming to Troas was called by special revelation into Greece. At Lystra he associated to himself a faithful disciple and companion of his travels, whose name was Timothy. With him and Silas he passed thro' Phrygia and Galatia, and setting sail from Troas for Macedonia came to Philippi. Here Saint Paul having cast a Pythonical spirit out of a young woman, he and Silas were carried before the magistrates, who ordered them to be scourged and cast into prison. The holy prisoners being at their prayers, a sudden earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, and set open the doors. The jailer went in, fell down at their feet, and was converted. The magistrates sent their serjeants next morning to let the prisoners go. Saint Paul complained, that being a Roman citizen he had been illegally treated, and therefore

fore would not depart, till the magiſtrates themſelves ſhould come and diſmiſs them honourably. The holy Apoſtle continued his journey to Theſſalonica, where he preached with great ſucceſs, till the violence of the Jews forced him to retire to Berea. He there met with the like perſecution; wherefore leaving Silas and Timothy behind him, he went to Athens, where he converted Denis the learned Areopagite. From Athens he directed his courſe to Corinth, and to Epheſus in the province of Ionia, in all which places he converted great numbers to the Chriſtian faith, and eſtabliſhed Church diſcipline amongſt them. The zeal of that great Apoſtle ſeemed to quicken, as he went; the more he ſuffered, the more his heart was on fire: the Jews perſecuted him in every place he came to; but the more he was oppoſed, the more he ſtrove to make Jeſus Chriſt known and honoured amongſt the nations.

§ LXXIII. *Sufferings of Saint Paul. Acts* 22, 23, &c.

A. D. 60. SAINT PAUL allowed himſelf no reſt; he never ceaſed announcing Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified, thro' all the different ſtates of Greece and Aſia minor: from province to province, from one iſland to another, he paſſed with indefatigable labour, braving every danger by land and ſea, as his paſtoral ſolicitude for the different Churches called him. When he could not viſit them in perſon, he inſtructed, reprehended, and exhorted, as charity directed, by his epiſtles. The glory of God and the ſalvation of ſouls were the only objects, that occupied the thoughts of that zealous Apoſtle. Tho' he had great difficulties to ſtruggle with, he was comforted to ſee his preaching ſeconded by the faith of thouſands, and his endeavours perfected by the ſpecial graces of Almighty God. For it was not by himſelf, as he ſays, but by the grace of God with him, that he performed ſuch wonders. The gift of miracles was ſo conſpicuous in him, that even the handkerchiefs and aprons, which had touched his body, healed

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the ſick, and put the infernal ſpirits to flight. From viſiting the Churches of Aſia he was called to Jeruſalem, where he foreſaw great trials would befall him. For having been ordained the Apoſtle of the Gentiles, the Jews of Jeruſalem looked upon him, as an enemy to their Law and the holy Temple. He had not been there many days, before the city was in an uproar. They ſeized him in the very Temple, dragged him forth, and amidſt a riotous croud of citizens were preparing to kill him, when the Roman Tribune, being appriſed of the tumult, took with him a file of ſoldiers, and haſtened to the place. The Jews, being awed by the ſoldiers preſence, left off beating the bleſſed Apoſtle, and the Tribune immediately laying hold of him, commanded him to be bound in chains, aſking, who he was, and what he had done. Some cried out one thing, ſome another; nothing was to be heard but clamour and tumult. The Tribune therefore, not being able to learn any thing for certain amidſt ſuch confuſion, ordered his ſoldiers to lead off the priſoner to their quarters. The people followed with loud cries and inſolence, demanding his death. The Apoſtle aſked the Tribune's leave to ſpeak to them; which being granted, he made a ſign with his hand to the people, as he ſtood upon the ſtairs, and there being a profound ſilence, he began to harangue them in the Hebrew tongue. He gave them a clear and circumſtantial account of his birth at Tarſus, and education at Jeruſalem, of his doctrine and zeal for the Law of his forefathers, of his former violence againſt the Chriſtians, of his converſion and miſſion amongſt the Gentiles. They liſtened with great attention, till he mentioned the Gentiles; they then interrupted him, and cried aloud, that ſuch a man was not fit to live. The Tribune conveyed him away within the quarters, ordering him to be ſcourged and put to the torture, that he might know, why they thus cried out againſt him. When they had bound him, Paul aſked the Centurion, whether it was lawful to ſcourge a Roman citizen uncondemned? The Centurion hearing that, went to the Tribune and told him, this man was a Roman citizen. Fearful of the conſequences,

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the Tribune was ſorry for having bound him; came ſtreight to the holy Apoſtle, unlooſed his chains, and appointed the next day for him to plead his cauſe, before the council of the Jews.

The Council was compoſed of two different ſects, of Phariſees and Sadducees, who were equally as violent in temper, as they were oppoſite in opinion concerning the doctrine of Spirits and a future reſurrection. Saint Paul took advantage of that diſagreement of his judges, and profeſſed himſelf of the Phariſean ſect in his belief and hope of the reſurrection of the dead. The Council was thereupon divided in their judgments for and againſt him; the diſpute grew warm, and the Tribune, being apprehenſive, leſt Paul might be torn to pieces by them, ordered a guard of ſoldiers to go and bring him ſafe within the quarters. The Jews were not yet ſatisfied; their malice againſt the holy Apoſtle was implacable, and more than forty of the moſt fiery zealots bound themſelves by oath neither to eat nor drink, till they ſhould ſee him dead. Saint Paul received notice of this conſpiracy from his ſiſter's ſon, and acquainted the Tribune with it, who for his ſecurity ordered a ſtrong body of troops to eſcort him out of town, and convey him to Felix the governor at Cæſarea. Felix at firſt ſight diſcovered his innocence, yet being in hopes of extorting money from him for his releaſe, kept him two years a cloſe priſoner, till Feſtus arrived to ſucceed him in the government of the province. The Jews preſented a petition to the new governor, that he would order Paul to be ſent from Cæſarea to Jeruſalem. Had their requeſt been granted, their deſign was to have aſſaſſinated him upon the road. The Apoſtle knew their intention, and had no other way of preventing its effect than by appealing to Cæſar. Feſtus promiſed him he ſhould be ſent to Rome. A few days after, king Agrippa came to ſalute Feſtus at Cæſarea; their converſation turned upon the ſubject of Saint Paul: Agrippa had heard much of the wonderful man, and was eager to ſee him. Feſtus promiſed him he ſhould both ſee and hear him. Next day the venerable priſoner was brought forth into the hall

hall of audience before the principal men of the city, and permitted to ſpeak for himſelf. The holy Apoſtle began by ſaying, how happy he was in being permitted to plead before Agrippa, and in the ſequel of his diſcourſe ſpoke with ſuch ſtrength and eloquent ſimplicity of expreſſion, that Agrippa told him in the end, he had almoſt perſuaded him to become a Chriſtian. He proved his innocence ſo much to the ſatisfaction of all, who heard him, that both Feſtus and Agrippa publicly declared, he might have been ſet at liberty, if he had not appealed to Cæſar. Saint Paul was therefore committed to the care of Julius, a Centurion, who had orders to conduct him to Rome. Having taken leave of his friends, he was put on board a ſhip with other priſoners, and after a long and perilous navigation thro' boiſterous winds and ſeas, was at laſt ſhipwrecked upon the coaſt of Malta. The ſhip went to pieces upon the rocks, the crew got ſafe aſhore, where they experieneed great humanity from the inhabitants. Saint Paul having gathered a bundle of ſticks and laid them upon the fire, which was kindled to dry their clothes, a viper came out of the heat, faſtened to his hand, and there hung: the barbarians from thence concluded him to be a murderer, whom the divine juſtice had overtaken by land after having ſpared him at ſea. But when they ſaw him ſhake off the venemous creature into the fire without receiving any hurt, they altered their opinion, and fancied him to be a God. The Apoſtle during his ſtay there employed his miraculous power in favour of the ſick, and amongſt others healed the father of Publius, who was governor of the iſland. At the end of three months he embarked again, and paſſing by ſeveral places landed at Puteoli, and from thence went to Rome. He there met with courteous treatment from the Romans, being permitted to remain unmoleſted in his own private lodging under a ſingle guard, and to ſee whom he pleaſed. He remained a priſoner in that manner for two years, during which time he ceaſed not to preach the faith of Chriſt to all, who came to ſee him, and made many converts, even

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of Cæsar's household, as we gather from his Epistle to the Philippians.

Saint Luke here finishes his history of the acts of the Apostles. Of all the holy Fathers, who have left us their comments upon Saint Paul, Saint Chrysostom seems to have carried his ideas of him to the highest point of panegyric. He speaks with raptures of his virtues, and displays the flowers of his golden eloquence in setting forth the praises of a Saint, the memory of whose sufferings gave him singular comfort and encouragement amidst the like trials, which he himself had to undergo in the cause of Jesus Christ.

§ LXXIV. *Revelations of Saint John. c.* 1.

A. D. 94. ALTHOUGH the Revelations of Saint John are full of mystery, and obscure in themselves, yet the Saints and interpreters of holy Scripture esteem them, as a prophetic and instructive history of Christ's Church, from its first establishment upon earth to its final triumphant state in heaven. The first part relates to the particular Churches, that were founded in Asia minor; the latter part regards the Catholic Church at large. The sacred intelligence is conveyed under the mysterious symbols of seals, trumpets, and vials. There are seven seals, to each of which corresponds a trumpet and a vial, and they denote as many periods of time, into which this last and seventh age of the world is subdivided. At the beginning of each period the Lamb is represented, as opening one of the seals, which incloses the great events, that are to befall the Church during that period. An Angel in consequence sounds the trumpet to give the alarm, as it were, to mankind, on account of the evils, that are going to ensue; while another Angel pours out the vial of divine vengeance upon sinners in punishment of the evils, they have brought upon the Church.

The Apostolic Prophet tells us, that being in the Island of Patmos, whither he had been banished by the Emperor

Emperor Domitian, he was raviſhed in Spirit upon the Lord's day, and heard behind him the ſhrill voice as it were of a trumpet, telling him to write down, what he ſaw. He turned himſelf round and beheld ſeven golden candleſticks, in the midſt of which there ſtood a perſon like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to his feet, and girted round about the breaſt with a golden girdle. His venerable locks were as white as ſnow, his eye-balls flamed like fire, his feet like burniſhed braſs, and his voice reſembled the ſound of many ruſhing waters. In his right hand he bore ſeven ſtars; from his mouth came out a ſharp two-edged ſword; his whole countenance ſhone like the ſun. Struck at the awful appearance, Saint John fell down at his feet, as tho' he had been dead. The myſterious perſonage then laid his right hand upon him, ſaying, Fear not; I am the firſt and the laſt, and alive, and I was dead; and behold I am living for ever and ever. The ſeven ſtars, you ſee in my right hand, repreſent as many Angels or Biſhops of the ſeven Churches in Aſia, ſignified by the ſeven candleſticks. What you therefore ſee, write in a book, and ſend it to the ſeven Churches. To the Angel of Epheſus ſay, That I commend him for the labours he has endured, for his zeal againſt the deeds of the impious, and for his patience in ſuffering; but that I have ſomething againſt him, for having fallen from his firſt fervour. Let him therefore reflect from whence he is fallen, and do penance. To the Angel of Smyrna impart the words of conſolation amidſt the ſufferings of perſecution and ſlander, which he is forced to undergo. Let him prepare for new conflicts, and perſevere, as he has begun, faithful unto the end; I will give him the crown of life. Tell the Angel of Pergamus, that his ſtedfaſt faith is acceptable to me, but that I expect him to ſhow more vigour againſt the teachers of wicked doctrine: let him do penance, or I will come quickly to him. Tell the Biſhop of Thyatira, That I ſee his charity to the poor, his fortitude in ſufferings, and his fervour in good works; but that I have ſomething againſt him,

him, because he suffers the false prophetess Jezabel to seduce my servants. Inform the Bishop of Sardis, That he is dead in the sight of God, tho' he has the name of being alive; his works are imperfect. Let him do penance, and remember, what talents he has received, and what he has heard; else I will come and surprise him, like a thief in the night. Let the Angel of Philadelphia know, that I love him, on account of his fidelity and patience in sufferings; that I will strengthen him against the hour of temptation, and make him a pillar in the Temple of my God. In the last place, tell the Bishop of Laodicea, that I cannot bear him on account of his tepidity, and that I am ready to cast him from me: he thinks himself rich, and does not see, that he is miserable, and poor, and blind and naked. Let him therefore purchase of me the purest gold, that he may become rich, and provide himself with white garments, that the shame of his nakedness may not appear.

The judgments here passed by Jesus Christ upon those respectable prelates of the Church, are a subject of alarm to all Christians, who are upon their way towards heaven. Jesus Christ revealed to his beloved Apostle, says Saint Gregory, the good, which those seven Bishops had performed, and yet declared, that they had penance still to do for the evil, which had crept in amongst their good works. In the strictness of his justice he discerned the progress, they had made in virtue, and noticed the degrees they had fallen from their first fervour. From amidst their shining actions he distinguished each single fault, and let not pass any one speck, that disfigured the beauty of their virtues. A single omission of duty, one neglect of vigour, when it was called for, provoked his displeasure, and nothing but a timely repentance could secure the most venerable and otherwise virtuous personages from being removed from their station, and seeing their crowns given to others. In this mysterious revelation, continues the holy Pontiff, Jesus Christ informs us, how little the most virtuous Christians have to glory in, and how great reason they have to humble themselves before God. If we only dive into our own hearts,

hearts, and with an impartial eye ſurvey the foldings of our conſciences, we ſhall diſcover more than enough to confound our pride, and to give us a miſtruſt of all the good, we think ourſelves poſſeſſed of.

§ LXXV. *Opening of the Heavens.* *Apoc.* 4.

FROM that firſt ſcene, which was exhibited upon the earth to Saint John, he was in ſpirit rapt up to heaven. The heavens opened to his view, and a voice like that of a trumpet ſummoned him to come and ſee the things, which were to happen in after times. Behold! a throne was ſet in heaven, and upon the throne One ſitting, whoſe appearance was as the brilliant jaſper and ſardine ſtone. A bright rainbow, like an emerald, extended itſelf over the throne, and edged it round with a variegated crown of the moſt lively colours. In a circle round the throne ſtood four and twenty ſeats, on which there ſat four and twenty Elders, robed in white, with crowns of gold upon their heads. From the throne there iſſued out lightnings, and thunders, and voices: before the throne were ſeven burning lamps, which are the ſeven ſpirits of God: far and wide, as if it were the floor of heaven, was expanded a boundleſs plain, reſembling the glaſſy ſurface of a calm and tranſparent ſea. In the midſt and round about the throne ſtood four living creatures, full of eyes on every part of them. The firſt of theſe creatures had the reſemblance of a lion; the ſecond of a calf; the third of a man, and the fourth of an eagle upon the wing. They ceaſed not day and night crying out, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who is, and who is to come! And whilſt the four living creatures proclaimed that canticle of praiſe to Him, who ſat upon the throne, the four and twenty Elders proſtrated themſelves before him, and laid their crowns at his feet, ſaying, Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honour, and power, becauſe thou haſt created all things, and for thy will they were,

were, and have been created. In the right hand of him, who ſat upon the throne, Saint John ſaw a book, written on every ſide, and ſealed with ſeven ſeals. A mighty Angel advanced, and proclaimed with a loud voice, if any one was there worthy to open the book, and to looſe the ſeven ſeals thereof: and no one was found. Saint John upon that poured out a flood of tears, and one of the Elders ſaid to him, Weep not; for behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, has conquered by his death, and merited the power of opening the book, and of looſing the ſeven ſeals thereof. Saint John then looked, and ſaw ſtanding in the midſt of that celeſtial aſſembly, a Lamb with ſeven horns and ſeven eyes, reſembling a victim, that had been ſlain. The Lamb advanced, and took the book out of the hand of Him, who ſat upon the throne, and opened it: at that moment the four living creatures and the four and twenty Elders fell down before him; each one having in his hand a harp and golden vial full of fragrant odours, which are the prayers of the Saints. They all began a new canticle of praiſe in honour of the Lamb, ſaying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book, and open the ſeals thereof; becauſe thou haſt been ſlain, and by thy blood haſt redeemed us unto God out of every tribe and nation upon the earth. At the ſame time thouſands and thouſands of Angels raiſed their voices, in honour of the Lamb, that was ſlain, and every creature, which is in heaven, and on the earth, and in the ſea, joined in ſinging benediction, and glory, and power to Him who ſitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever: and the four living creatures ſaid Amen.

The holy Fathers ſeem loſt in admiration at the profound homage, which the happy citizens of heaven pay to Jeſus Chriſt, as Saint John has deſcribed him under the emblematical figure of a Lamb. To Him is given all power in heaven and on earth; the power of diſcloſing thoſe myſterious ſecrets, which had been ſealed up in the boſom of the Divinity, and which none but a God-man could dive into. By his death and reſurrecti-

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on he has imparted to us a knowledge, of which the world was ignorant before: conſequently great is the obligation we are under of paying him our moſt grateful homage; wonderful are the ſecrets of his kingdom, which he has revealed unto us, and unremitting ought to be our endeavours to attain it. To join thoſe heavenly quires, and to ſing the praiſes of our Creator eternally with them is the object of our hope, and the completion of our pureſt deſires.

§ LXXVI. *The ſeven ſeals. Apoc. 6.*

THE Lamb, having received the book, began to exerciſe his power in opening the ſeven ſeals, which were ſet upon it. Upon his opening the firſt ſeal, one of the living creatures cried out with a voice as loud as thunder, Come and ſee. Saint John looked, and behold, a white horſe, the emblem of triumph. His rider was equipped with a bow, and had a crown upon his head, like ſome mighty conqueror, going forth in queſt of victory. At the ſecond ſeal there appeared another horſe, that was red, the baleful token of war. To him, who ſat thereon, was given a great ſword, and power to kindle bloody ſtrifes amongſt men, and to baniſh peace from the face of the earth. At the third ſeal there went forth a black horſe, the repreſentative of famine, and he, who ſat upon him, held a pair of ſcales in his hand. At his appearance a voice was heard, ſaying, Two pounds of wheat for a penny, and thrice two pounds of barley for a penny; but the wine and oil hurt thou not. At the fourth ſeal appeared a pale horſe, the ghaſtly mark of peſtilence. His rider was called Death, and Hell followed him. His power extended over the four parts of the earth to deſtroy mankind by the ſword, by famine, peſtilence, and the beaſts of the earth. At the fifth ſeal, St. John ſaw under the altar the ſouls of them, who had been ſlain for the word of God; and they cried with a loud voice to the Lord, holy and true, to juſtify their cauſe on earth. To each one of theſe a white

white robe was given, and they were told to reſt awhile, till the number ſhould be filled up of their brethren, who were to fall a ſacrifice like them, in teſtimony of the truth. At the ſixth ſeal thoſe deadly terrors enſued, which ſhall ſtrike the wicked at the approach of God's avenging day. For there was a great earthquake, the ſun became black, as ſackcloth of hair, the moon grew red as blood, and the ſtars from heaven fell upon the earth. The heaven itſelf ſhrunk back like a book, or a ſheet of parchment, that is rolled together: the mountains and the iſlands were ſhaken out of their places; the kings of the earth, the princes and mighty warriors, the rich and powerful ran to hide themſelves in dens and caverns of the earth. Overwhelmed with terror, they called upon the rocks and mountains to fall down and ſcreen them from the face of Him, who ſitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Such is the deſcription of thoſe alarming images, which were revealed to Saint John. The dreadful diſplay of divine juſtice, and the terrors of the wicked at the expectation of evils, that they fear, are exhibited in ſuch ſtriking colours, that we cannot but tremble at the imperfect glimpſe, we catch of them. The obſcurity, in which theſe truths are revealed at preſent, diſcloſes enough to fix our faith, and at the ſame time excites our apprehenſions of ſomething ſtill more terrible, than we can yet diſcover. I am perſuaded, ſays Saint Denis of Alexandria, that the revelations of Saint John are as ſublime in themſelves, as they are unintelligible to man. Tho' I do not comprehend the words I read, yet I know they contain ſomething great; the truth, tho' concealed in obſcurity, is not leſs important. I pretend not to ſet myſelf up as a competent judge of theſe matters, nor do I meaſure them by the littleneſs of my own capacity; but truſting more to divine faith than to human reaſon, I firmly believe thoſe revealed points, tho' above the reach of my weak comprehenſion. My reſpect for divine revelation is not leſſened by its being obſcure; I reſpectfully receive the truth, which is revealed, and

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ſilently adore the myſteries, which I cannot comprehend.

§ LXXVII. *The ſeven trumpets. Apoc. 8.*

WHEN the Lamb had opened the ſeventh ſeal, there was ſilence in heaven, as it were for half an hour. Saint John then obſerved ſeven Angels, each with a trumpet in his hand, ſtanding in the preſence of God; another Angel came at the ſame time, having a golden cenſer, and placed himſelf before the altar. He was preſented with incenſe, that he might offer of the prayers of all the Saints upon the golden altar, which was erected before the throne of God. For by the incenſe the prayers of the Saints were repreſented, and the ſmoking fragrance aſcended up before God from the hand of the Angel. The Angel after that filled his cenſer with fire from the altar, and caſting it upon the earth, there enſued great earthquakes, and thunders, and voices. The ſeven Angels then prepared themſelves to ſound the trumpet. At the ſound of the firſt Angel's trumpet, there fell upon the earth a ſtorm of hail and fire, mingled with blood, which deſtroyed a third part of the earth and trees, and burnt up all the green graſs. The ſecond Angel ſounded his trumpet, and as it were a huge burning mountain was thrown into the ſea; a third part of the ſea was thereby turned into blood; a third part of the creatures, which had life in the ſea died, and of the ſhips a third part likewiſe periſhed. At the blaſt of the third Angel there fell from heaven a blazing ſtar, like a torch; and the name of the ſtar was called wormwood: it fell upon a third part of the ſprings and rivers, the waters of which being poiſoned in their ſource became bitter, and many men died thereof. The fourth Angel ſounded his trumpet; and behold, a third part of the ſun, of the moon, and of the ſtars, was ſmitten with darkneſs; ſo that the day and the night were deprived one third of their uſual light. At that moment an eagle flew through the midſt of heaven, ſcreaming with

with a loud voice, Wo, wo, wo to the inhabitants of the earth, by reaſon of the evils, which the three other Angels were ready to denounce.

By the exhibition of theſe awful ſcenes, as they were ſhown to Saint John, it appears, how dreadful the judgments are, which an offended God will pour out upon thoſe who ſlight his juſtice and abuſe his mercy. He warns ſinners long before hand of the ſevere puniſhment, which awaits the impenitent in another world. He ſends forth his Angels, the miniſters of his holy word, to rouſe mankind out of the lethargy of ſin, to awaken in them a reſpect for his ſacred law, and a fear of offending him. He calls the ſinner to repentance, he patiently waits his return; but he waits not beyond the term, that his wiſdom has fixed; he ſuffers not his patience to be abuſed with impunity; when the time of mercy is run out, every thing then becomes ſubſervient to his juſtice.

§ LXXVIII. *The locuſts.* *Apoc.* 9.

THE fifth Angel having ſounded his trumpet, Saint John ſaw a ſtar fall from heaven to the earth, and to him was given the key of the bottomleſs pit. He opened the mouth of the pit, from whence a thick ſmoke aroſe, as from a burning furnace; and the light of the ſun, and the air was darkened. From the ſmoke of the pit there ſwarmed out locuſts, which had the power of ſcorpions to vex and ſting mankind. But their power was reſtrained to thoſe men only, who had not the ſeal of God upon their forehead: nor were they permitted to hurt the trees, or the graſs, or any green thing of the earth. Neither had they a power given them over the lives of men: their power was not to kill, but to torment for five months; and the pain, they cauſed, was like to that of a ſcorpion, when he ſtriketh a man. In thoſe days, ſays the ſacred text, men ſhall ſeek death, and ſhall not find it; they ſhall wiſh to die, and death ſhall fly from them. The ſhape of theſe monſters was like to that of a war-horſe, prepared for battle. They

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wore on their heads a ſort of glittering crown, like gold; in their face they reſembled men, had the hair of women, and the teeth of lions. They were armed with iron breaſt-plates, and the noiſe, they made with their wings, was like the rumbling ſound of many horſes and chariots ruſhing on to battle. They had a tail, like that of a ſcorpion, and in their tail a ſting. They had over them a king, the Angel of darkneſs from the bottomleſs pit, whoſe name was Abaddon, that is to ſay, the Deſtroyer. This was the firſt of the three laſt Woes ſpoken by the eagle. The ſixth Angel then ſounded his trumpet, and from the four corners of the golden altar was heard a voice, ſaying to him, Let looſe the four Angels, that are bound in the great river Euphrates. The four Angels were accordingly looſed, who were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, to deſtroy the third part of men. Their preparations for war were immenſely formidable; the number of their troops amounted to two hundred millions. Saint John ſays he ſaw their horſes and their riders. The riders were covered with breaſt-plates of fire, of hyacinth and brimſtone: the horſes had heads like lions, and from their mouths iſſued forth fire, and ſmoke and brimſtone. The power of thoſe horſes was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like to ſerpents: they had heads, and with them they hurt. By them a third part of men was ſlain, and of thoſe, who ſurvived, none repented of their ſins, none refrained from the works of iniquity; nor did they ceaſe from their idolatrous worſhip of devils and molten gods.

To the locuſts and the horſes, who are deſcribed by Saint John to have ſuch power in their mouths and tails, Saint Gregory compares all hypocrites and falſe teachers. For theſe alſo under their lips have venom and a ſting, with which they wound and hurt mankind: under the diſguiſe of a glittering outſide they walk abroad, and, as they want neither art to flatter, nor abilities to pleaſe, work themſelves by degrees into favour with the people and potentates of the earth, in order to gain their wick-

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ed ends. Thus it was, that the Arians, like other ſectaries of every age and clime, impoſed upon the world, and maintained a formidable party againſt the Church, till being broken by inteſtine jars and diſputes of doctrine amongſt themſelves, they ſunk at laſt, like inſects, into the earth again, from whence they ſprung.

§ LXXIX. *The myſterious book. Apoc.* 10.

SAINT JOHN ſaw another mighty Angel deſcend from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and crowned with a rainbow on his head: his face ſhone like the ſun, and his feet were as pillars of fire. In his hand he held a little book, which was open; then ſetting his right foot upon the ſea, and his left upon the land, he cried out as loud, as is the roaring of a lion, and was anſwered by ſeven voices, that uttered their ſentences in thunder. Saint John was about to write the things, which the ſeven thunders had uttered, when a voice from heaven bade him ſeal them up, and write them not. The Angel, ſtill ſtanding upon the land and ſea, lifted up his hand to heaven, and ſwore by Him, who liveth for ever and ever, who hath created the heaven, the earth, the ſea, and all things in them, that time ſhould be no more; that as ſoon as the ſeventh Angel ſhould begin to ſound his trumpet, the myſtery of God ſhould be finiſhed, as he hath declared by his ſervants the Prophets. When he had ſaid this, the voice again from heaven ſpoke to Saint John, bidding him go and take the little book from the Angel's hand. The Apoſtle went and aſked the Angel, as he was ſtill ſtanding, to give him the book. Take it, ſaid the Angel, and eat it up: in thy mouth it ſhall be ſweet as honey, but when thou haſt ſwallowed it, thou ſhalt find it bitter in thy bowels. Thou muſt propheſy again to many nations, to different kings and people. Saint John received the book from his hand, and when he had eaten it, found it both ſweet and bitter, as the Angel had aſſured him.

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The little book, mentioned in this revelation, is, according to the holy Fathers, no other than the holy Scripture, which furniſhes our ſouls with food and nouriſhment. We cannot digeſt it of ourſelves, nor can we comprehend, what it contains, without the ſpecial grace and direction of Almighty God; he himſelf muſt deliver it to us by his Angels, or miniſters, as he did to Saint John, and once before to Ezechiel the Prophet. We then eat that book, according to Saint Gregory, when by the help of the Holy Ghoſt we reliſh and digeſt the ſacred truths, which it contains. To thoſe, who know what it is to taſte the ſweets of virtue, the ſacred truths are ſweet and pleaſant; but to thoſe, who are addicted to ſenſual pleaſures, the knowledge, which reſtrains them, is bitter and diſguſtful. It may alſo happen, ſays the ſame Saint Gregory, that we experience within ourſelves the ſame two contrary effects of ſweet and bitter from the ſame knowledge. For the more we know of God, the more we know alſo of ourſelves. Unleſs God enlightens us, there is nothing but darkneſs in us. Numberleſs defects, ſins and paſſions lie concealed within our hearts, unknown to our very ſelves, till the light of the Holy Ghoſt ſhows them to us. Then it is, that we begin with bitterneſs of heart to reflect upon our paſt follies, and to beg with the royal Prophet, that all our deſires may henceforward be directed ſolely to the Lord. Let me know thee, my God, let me know myſelf, was the fervent prayer of Saint Auſtin.

§ LXXX. *Death of the two Prophets. Apoc.* 11.

AFTER Saint John had taken the book, he was preſented with a reed like unto a rod, and bid to riſe and meaſure the Temple of God, the altar, and them, that adored therein; but not to regard the outward court, becauſe it was abandoned to the Gentiles, who were permitted to trample the holy city under foot two and forty months. My two witneſſes, ſaid the Almighty, ſhall propheſy

prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days; they are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the Lord of the earth: out of their mouths fire shall flame to devour their enemies, who attempt to hurt them. To these is given a power to shut the heavens, that no rain may fall the whole time of their prophecy; they have a power to turn the waters into blood, and to afflict the earth with plagues, as often as they will: and when they shall have given full testimony of the truth, the Beast, that ascendeth out of the abyss, shall be permitted to assault, to conquer, and to kill them. Their dead bodies shall be exposed in the streets of the great city, which is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt; it is the city, where their Lord was crucified. Strangers of the tribes, of different tongues and nations, shall see their bodies lying for three days and a half, and not suffer them to be interred. The inhabitants of the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry; they shall send presents to one another, because the two Prophets are dead, who sorely tormented them. The revelation of this history is thus far related in the prophetic style, as of a thing to come; but as in the divine sight there is no event, however far removed into futurity from us, but what is present or even past with respect to God, the narration goes on from this place, as of a past transaction. For after three days and a half, says the sacred text, the Spirit of life returned into the two Prophets: they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon all, who saw them. Summoned by a voice from heaven, saying, Come up hither, they mounted in a cloud before the face of their enemies, and went triumphantly to heaven. At that hour a violent earthquake was felt, by which the tenth part of the city fell down, and seven thousand men were slain: the survivors were seized with dread, and gave glory to the God of heaven. At that period the second Wo was past; the third Wo will come quickly. The seventh Angel sounded his trumpet, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of this world is become our Lord's, and his Christ's, and he shall reign for ever and ever.

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The four and twenty elders fell on their faces and adored God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come: the time is come, when the dead shall rise and be judged, and thou shalt render to thy servants the reward of their labours, and to the wicked, who have corrupted the earth, punishment and everlasting destruction.

It is remarked by Saint Austin, that as the Church began, so she will likewise end in sufferings and persecution upon earth, that so she may be perfected for her triumphant state in heaven. For not only the two Prophets, of which the Apocalypse makes mention, but many more heroic Saints in those latter days, shall suffer martyrdom with invincible patience. Tho' attacked by the infernal dragon with unbridled fury, they yet shall triumph through the grace of Him, who suffers not his servants to be assailed with greater trials, than he enables them to bear. The devil has no further power against us, than Jesus Christ allows him; and Jesus Christ allows him no more, than is necessary to try the patience and to perfect the virtues of his Elect.

§ LXXXI. *The Beast of the Apocalypse. Apoc.* 13.

THE description of the Beast, that slew the two great Prophets, is drawn in the most frightful colours: Saint John saw him emerge from the sea. It was a monster with seven heads and ten horns: upon his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads names of blasphemy. In shape he resembled a leopard with bear's feet and a lion's mouth. One of his heads, he saw, had been struck with a mortal wound, but the wound was then healed. His strength was enormous, and that strength he received from the dragon. The whole earth seemed to be in great admiration of the Beast: they ran after him in crouds, they adored him, and lavished wonderful praises on him. He spoke great things; he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his sacred

cred name and his tabernacle, and all the bleſſed citizens of heaven. Power was given him to make war upon the Saints for two and forty months, and to overcome them: his empire was univerſal; it extended over all the nations of the earth, and all adored him, who had not their names written in the book of life. After that Saint John ſaw another Beaſt coming up from the earth: this Beaſt had two horns, like a lamb, and ſpoke as a dragon. He executed the power of the former Beaſt, and compelled the inhabitants of the earth to adore him. To this ſecond Beaſt was granted a power of performing great wonders and ſeeming miracles, ſo as to call down fire from heaven. By theſe ſigns he ſeduced many from their duty to God; he gave life and ſpeech to an image of the Beaſt, which he cauſed to be made and ſet up as an idol, ordering them to be ſlain, who ſhould refuſe to adore it. He ſhall oblige every one, both little and great, rich and poor, to wear a mark or a ſign of their ſubmiſſion to the Beaſt, and no one ſhall be allowed either to buy or ſell, who has not that mark either in his right hand or upon his forehead: which mark ſhall be either the name of the Beaſt written at length, or the number of his name; for it is the number of a man, and the number of him is ſix hundred ſixty ſix.

The eyes of Saint John were drawn from theſe two frightful monſters to behold the Lamb, that appeared ſtanding upon mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty four thouſand choſen ſouls, who had his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. Theſe ſung, as it were, a new ſong before the throne, and the heavenly arches reſounded with joyful harmony. Theſe are they, in whoſe mouth there was no lie, and who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins, and follow the Lamb whitherſoever he goes: robed in innocence, they are without ſpot before the throne of God. This proſpect was preſently interrupted by an Angel flying thro' the midſt of heaven, and crying with a loud voice, Fear the Lord, and give honour to him, becauſe the hour of his judgment is come. That Angel was followed by two others, the firſt of which ſaid, She is fallen, the great

Babylon

Babylon is fallen; and the other proclaimed aloud, That if any man ſhould adore the Beaſt and his image, and receive his mark, either in his hand or on his forehead, the ſame ſhall alſo drink of the cup of God's wrath, and be tormented with fire and brimſtone. They, who ſhall be doomed to this puniſhment, ſhall have no reſt by day or night; for the ſmoke of their torments ſhall aſcend for ever and ever in the ſight of the holy Angels, and in the ſight of the Lamb. Here is the patience of the Saints, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jeſus: and a voice from heaven, ſaid, Bleſſed are they who die in the Lord, that they may reſt from their labours, for their works follow them.

Saint Gregory is diffuſe in his remarks upon theſe two beaſts of the Apocalypſe: the ſecond more eſpecially makes him tremble. His outward figure is that of a lamb, but his language is the language of a dragon, deceitful and poiſonous. The deſcription, ſays the holy Doctor, gives us a faithful picture of thoſe ſeducing hypocrites, who go about to draw men into perdition and the ſnares of the devil. They ſpring from the earth, that is to ſay, they are engendered and exiſt by a power altogether earthly; they wear the appearance of a lamb, that unſuſpecting mortals may not be afraid of coming near them; and when they have drawn them within their reach, they then entangle them in the ſerpent's folds, and kill them with their poiſonous breath.

§ LXXXII. *The ſeven vials. Apoc.* 15.

SAINT JOHN ſays, he ſaw another ſign in heaven great and wonderful. He ſaw ſeven Angels holding in their hands the ſeven laſt plagues, which are the accompliſhment of God's wrath. Theſe Angels coming out of the Temple, for the Temple of the tabernacle was there diſplayed in full view, received from one of the four living creatures ſeven golden vials, full of the wrath of God. A loud voice at the ſame time came from the Temple, ſaying, Go, pour out the ſeven vials of God's

wrath

wrath upon the earth. The firſt Angel then went and poured out his vial upon the earth. A ſore and grievous wound that inſtant fell upon thoſe, who had the mark of the Beaſt, and had adored his image. The ſecond Angel poured out his vial upon the ſea, which became like the blood of a dead man, and every living creature died therein. The third Angel poured out his vial upon the ſprings and rivers, and they were changed into blood. The Angel, that preſided over the ſtreams, then ſaid, Thou art juſt, O Lord, in thy judgments; for they have ſhed the blood of thy Saints and of thy Prophets, and thou in return haſt drenched them with blood: Yea, anſwered another Angel from the altar, O Lord God Almighty, true and juſt are thy judgments. The fourth Angel poured out his vial upon the ſun, which became thereupon exceeding hot, and with its burning rays ſcorched men to death. Parched with the piercing heat, ſinners blaſphemed God, and remained impenitent. The fifth Angel poured out his vial upon the throne of the Beaſt, and his kingdom became dark. Bitter pains and wounds afflicted his wicked partizans; they blaſphemed the God of heaven; they gnawed their tongues through pain, but did not penance for their ſins. The ſixth Angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, the waters of which were immediately dried up, and made an eaſy paſſage for the kings to march from the Eaſt. Then from the mouth of the Dragon, from the mouth of the Breaſt, and from the mouth of the falſe Prophet, Saint John ſaw three unclean Spirits coming out like frogs. For the infernal Spirits ſhall work ſigns in thoſe days, going forth to gather the kings of the whole earth to battle againſt the great day of Almighty God, and they ſhall be all gathered together in one place, called Armagedon. The ſeventh Angel poured out his vial into the air, upon which a tremendous voice was heard from the Temple, ſaying, It is done. Dreadful flaſhes of lightning, mixed with loud claps of thunder, ſhot acroſs the ſky, and the earth ſhook in ſuch a manner, as had been never known before. The great city was ſplit into three parts, the cities

of

of the nations fell, and the great Babylon was remembered in the vengeance of a just God.

Then came one of the seven Angels to Saint John, and said, that he would show him the great harlot, with whom the kings of the earth had sinned, and by the wine of whose prostitution the inhabitants of the earth had been intoxicated. The Apostle therefore was taken away in spirit into the desert, where he saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, which was covered over with names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. She was clothed in scarlet, ornamented with gold and precious stones, and held a cup in her hand. Upon her forehead was written the word, Mystery; Babylon the great, the mother of the fornications and abominations of the earth: and she was drunk with the blood of the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus.

This wicked woman, according to the holy Fathers, is an expressive figure of the world, which intoxicates the minds of men with the cup of sinful pleasures, and dazzles them with the glittering pride of life, till by its abominations it draws upon itself and them the stroke of God's severest judgments. The name Mystery, which the harlot showed upon her brow, indicates the blindness of worldly men, who sport away their time, heedless of the evils, that hang over them. Full of the present enjoyment, they think not of futurity, and sit enchanted with their fancied happiness. But death soon must break the slender thread of life, and dissolve the charm. The mystery will be then unfolded; they will clearly see, that they have toiled thro' life to perish in the end; that by false pleasures or by real evils they have forfeited their title to the joys of heaven, and incurred the guilt of eternal pains.

§ LXXXIII. *Ruin of Babylon. Apoc.* 18.

AFTER the mysterious prodigies already related, Saint John says, he saw another Angel coming down from heaven; great was his power, and his glory

illumined the earth. With a mighty voice he cried, She is fallen, the great Babylon is fallen; ſhe is become the habitation of devils, and the haunt of every unclean ſpirit. Of her poiſonous cup all the nations have drunk; with her the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the merchants of the earth have been enriched with her luxurious delicacies. Wherefore go out from her, my people, ſaid another voice, fly from Babylon, leſt you become partaker of her ſins and puniſhment. For her ſins have reached unto heaven, and the Lord hath remembered her iniquities. Treat her, as ſhe hath treated you; pay her double for all her works, and in the cup, which ſhe preſented to you, mingle unto her the double of what ſhe gave. Multiply her ſorrows, and heap torments on her in proportion to her pride and wantonneſs. For ſhe ſaid in her heart, I ſit a queen, and am no widow, and ſorrow I ſhall not ſee. She therefore in a day ſhall find herſelf overwhelmed with plagues, with death, with mourning, and with famine, and ſhe ſhall be burnt with fire. The ſmoke of her deſtruction ſhall be ſeen from afar; the kings of the earth, who were ſharers of her ſinful delights, ſhall weep and bewail themſelves over her. But the fear of ſharing in her torments ſhall keep them at a diſtance. They ſhall ſtand afar off, and exclaim, Alas! alas! that great, that mighty city Babylon, how in an hour is thy judgment come! The merchants alſo of the earth ſhall weep and mourn over her; for no man ſhall there traffic any more. Her gold, her ſilver, her pearls, her precious ſtones, her fine linnen, her purple ſilk and ſcarlet, her frankincenſe, her odoriferous woods, and every other coſtly commodity, are periſhed with her. The pleaſures and magnificence of her riches, in which ſhe formerly rioted, are now loſt, never more to be recovered. The pilots and the mariners, as they ſail along the ſea, ſhall look at a diſtance, and pointing at the place of her conflagration, ſay, What city was ever equal to that great city, which poured out her riches into the boſom of the merchants? Alas! how deſolate is ſhe become! How quickly is her greatneſs fallen! While the mariners, the merchants,

and

and the kings of the earth thus wept over the ſinful city, the citizens of heaven, the holy Apoſtles and Prophets, were invited to rejoice for the judgment, God had paſſed upon her. A ſtrong Angel ſtook up a huge ſtone, as it were a mill-ſtone, and caſt it into the deep ſea, ſaying, So ſhall the great Babylon be thrown down, and appear no more. The ſound of the harp and flute ſhall no longer hail the day of gladneſs in thee: in thee no artiſt ſhall be found: the light of a lamp ſhall not ſhine, nor ſhall the voice of the bridegroom and the bride any more be heard. For thy merchants were the princes of the earth, and by thy enchantments the nations have been ſeduced: the blood of the Prophets, and of the other Saints has been there ſpilt.

The lamentations of the mariners, of the merchants, and kings of the earth, weeping over the deſtruction of their favorite city Babylon, are ſolemn, and expreſſive of the vanity of all worldly greatneſs. They remember the good things, they had there enjoyed, and bemoan their loſs: with deep regret they deplore their misfortune, not for having miſplaced their affections, but for being no longer able to enjoy, what they loved. Thus have the wicked toiled, ſays the wiſe man, thus have they wearied themſelves in the path of iniquity; their pride and their riches have profited them nothing. As fools they erred from the way of truth; their hope vaniſhed in a moment, like the ſmoke, which is ſcattered before the wind. They paſſed their lives amidſt the plenty of good things upon earth, and in the twinkling of an eye went down to hell. With unavailing tears they there ſhall weep, and in deſpair ſhall gnaſh their teeth at the proſpect of evils, which ſhall never end.

§ LXXXIV. *The Dragon bound in chains. Apoc. 20.*

UPON the deſtruction of Babylon, the whole court of heaven, Saints and Angels, raiſed their melodious voices in ſinging Alleluias to their Almighty King, for the juſt judgments he had paſſed upon the great harlot.

The heavens opened, and behold a white horſe, and on the horſe One ſitting, who was called, *The Faithful and True*. His piercing eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many diadems: his robe was ſprinkled with blood, his name THE WORD OF GOD. Clothed in fine linnen, white and clean, the celeſtial armies followed him on white horſes. From his mouth proceeded a ſharp two-edged ſword, and on his garment and upon his thigh was written, THE KING OF KINGS, AND THE LORD OF LORDS! Then did Saint John ſee an Angel ſtanding in the ſun, and calling together the birds of the air to feaſt upon the fleſh of the ſlain. For the kings of the earth, with the Beaſt at their head, had drawn their armies together to make war againſt Him, who ſat upon the horſe. The Beaſt and his falſe Prophet were taken and caſt alive into the pool of fire burning with brimſtone. The reſt were ſlain by the ſword of the conqueror, and their fleſh devoured by the birds.

When this ſcene was paſſed, an Angel deſcended from heaven with the key of the bottomleſs pit, and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the Dragon, the old ſerpent, which is the devil and Satan, and having bound him with the chain, caſt him into the bottomleſs pit, and ſhut him up for a thouſand years, that he might ſeduce the nations no more, till that time be accompliſhed. Placed on ſeats then appeared thoſe happy ſouls, who never had adored the Beaſt, nor received his mark either on their foreheads or on their hands, but had given their lives in teſtimony of Jeſus Chriſt, with whom they reigned a thouſand years till the ſecond reſurrection, when they ſhall receive their full and complete happineſs in ſoul and body. And when the thouſand years ſhall be accompliſhed, Satan ſhall be looſed out of his priſon for a little while. He ſhall then go forth and rouſe to battle the nations, that lie in the four quarters of the globe. Innumerable, as the ſands of the ſea, their armies advanced, under the command of Gog and Magog to attack the camp of the Saints, and to encompaſs the beloved City. But fire flamed from heaven and devoured them; and the devil, who

ſeduced

ſeduced them, was caſt into the pool of fire and brimſtone, where both the Beaſt and the falſe prophet ſhall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Saint John then relates how he ſaw a great ſhining throne, and upon it One ſitting, before whoſe face heaven and earth fled away, and were ſeen no more. The dead had been ſummoned by a trumpet to riſe and come to judgment. He ſaw them ſtanding before the throne, the books were opened, and ſentence pronounced upon every one according to his works. Hell and death were caſt into the lake of fire, and with them all the reſt, whoſe names were not written in the book of life. This is the ſecond death.

It is generally agreed, that Saint John in theſe laſt chapters of his revelations ſpeaks of that dreadful perſecution, which thro' the power and inſtigation of the Devil ſhall be raiſed againſt the Chriſtian Church by Antichriſt, whom Saint Paul calls the man of ſin and ſon of perdition. Hence we find the Holy Fathers and ancient interpreters of the ſacred writings unanimous in their opinion upon the three following points: 1°. That Antichriſt can be but one determinate individual man; 2°. That that individual Man will not appear till towards the end of the world; 3°. That he ſhall not reign under that denomination for any long time, namely but for two and forty months. Conſequently every application of theſe myſterious truths, calculated to ſupport any private doctrine or party diſputes, is purely arbitrary, and deſtitute of all foundation both in the text of Scripture, and the writings of the Fathers. The meek ſpirit of chriſtianity, and ſimplicity of the Goſpel ſurely cannot teach us to ſtrain the word of God, and diſtort the obſcure myſteries of Prophecy to the purpoſe of railing at one another. The Revelations of Saint John are full of heavenly wiſdom; in terms the moſt clear, they unfold many important and inſtructive truths, which the moſt ignorant may underſtand, and the moſt ſimple cannot be deceived in. The majeſty of almighty God, and the power of Jeſus Chriſt, as it is deſcribed by Saint John, in the kingdom of his glory, the formi-

dable

dable attempts of Satan againſt the Elect of God, the dreadful terrors of the laſt day, the eternal torments of the reprobate in a lake of fire and brimſtone, and the conſummate happineſs of the Saints in heaven, are points, on which we may profitably employ our thoughts, and which we cannot too attentively conſider: they ground us in the principles of true Chriſtian knowledge, they teach us what to fear and what to hope for, they animate our faith and awaken our charity, they fix our choice and direct our practice in the purpoſe of a good life. Such is the fruit, which our bleſſed Lord deſires we ſhould reap from the reading of his holy word, leſt the reſtleſs cares of this life engage our hearts, and expoſe our ſouls to the danger of being untimely overtaken by the laſt day.

§ LXXXV. *The new Jeruſalem. Apoc.* 21.

AFTER the firſt heaven and the firſt earth and ſea had diſappeared, as Saint John ſays they did, when the Judge ſeated himſelf in his throne to judge the world, he ſaw a new heaven and a new earth ariſe. He ſaw the holy city, the new Jeruſalem coming down from God out of heaven, decked with rich ornaments, like a bride prepared for the reception of her ſpouſe: and he heard a voice from the throne ſaying, Behold, the tabernacle of God with men, and he will dwell with them: they ſhall be his people, and He dwelling in the midſt of them ſhall be their God. He ſhall wipe away the tears from their eyes, and death ſhall be no more: nor ſhall mourning, nor ſighs nor ſorrow be any longer, for the former things have now an end. After that, one of the ſeven angels, who had the vials, came to Saint John and taking him up in ſpirit to a high mountain, ſhowed him the heavenly Jeruſalem coming down out of heaven from God. The holy City was crowned with radiant light, the brightneſs of God himſelf, and the luſtre thereof was like to a precious ſtone. It was enc loſed with a high wall, drawn in a quadrangular form,

of

of equal length on every ſide. The wall was built on twelve foundations, in which were engraven the names of the twelve Apoſtles. The City had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve Angels, three to the eaſt, three to the north, three to the ſouth, & three to the weſt: on the twelve gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Iſrael, a name on each gate. The Angel, who converſed with Saint John had in his hand a golden reed, with which he meaſured the city, the gates and the wall thereof, and the dimenſions of the city were twelve thouſand furlongs every way. The wall was built of Jaſper, but the city itſelf was of pure gold, tranſparent as the cleareſt glaſs. The foundations of the wall were ornamented with every ſort of precious ſtone, and the twelve gates were ſo many pearls, each gate being made of one pearl. The ſtreets were paved with poliſhed gold, and the gates ſtood always open, it being one eternal day, which knew no night. The city had no need of the ſun or moon to enlighten it: for the Lamb was the lamp thereof, and the glory of God diffuſed a tranſcendent brightneſs thro' every part. Saint John ſaw no Temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb were the Temple. Nothing defiled ſhall ever enter into that holy place; nothing can be admitted there, which is tarniſhed with the leaſt ſpot of ſin; no one enters, who has not his name firſt written in the book of life. From the throne of God and of the Lamb there flowed the river of life, of which the ſtreams were as clear, as chryſtal. On each ſide of the river and in the centre of the city grew the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit every month; and its leaves were to heal the nations. There ſhall be no curſe any more: but the throne of God and of the Lamb ſhall be eternally there, and his ſervants ſhall ſerve him. They ſhall behold him face to face; his name ſhall be written upon their foreheads, and they ſhall reign for ever and ever. After all theſe things had been ſhown to Saint John by the Angel, Jeſus thus ſpoke to him: I have ſent my Angel to teſtify unto you theſe things, which muſt be done ſhortly. I am the root, and the

offspring

offspring of David, the bright and the morning ſtar. Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me to render to every one according to his works. I am Alpha and Omega, the firſt and the laſt, the beginning and the end. Bleſſed are they, who waſh their garments in the blood of the Lamb, that they may be worthy to enter into the city, and partake of the tree of life.

Such is the deſcription, which Saint John has given us of the heavenly Jeruſalem, and ſuch is the pleaſing picture, that Jeſus Chriſt has revealed of the immenſe happineſs, which he has prepared for his Elect. The images are drawn in ſuch colours and with ſuch materials, that while they place the objects of our wiſhes within the reach of our weak ſenſes, they give us an idea of ſomething ſtill more exquiſite, which we cannot comprehend. For heavenly happineſs in itſelf is ſuch, as no mortal eye can ſee, & no heart conceive. Good Chriſtians always keep that holy city in view, thither their hearts aſpire, thither their thoughts and affections tend. Knowing, that the glory there is in different degrees proportioned to their labours here, they willingly ſubmit to the chiſel of affliction, and joyfully bear the ſtrokes of contradiction and ſufferings from a wicked world, that they may be worthy of the joys of heaven. They never forget the pool of fire burning with brimſtone, which is ſo often mentioned in the book of Revelations, that the fear of ſinning may not be extinguiſhed. Thither they often look down with one eye, while the other is turned up to heaven, the eternal manſions of the Bleſſed, that their ſouls may be animated with freſh hope, and quickened with new deſires. Love but the goods, which God has promiſed you, ſays Saint Auſtin, and fear the evils, which he threatens you; with ſteady virtue you will then deſpiſe whatever promiſes and whatever threats this vain world can make you.

FINIS.



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FINIS.